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A WOMAN'S REASON

A NOVEL

BY

WILLIAM D. HOWELLS

AUTHOR OF "A MODERN INSTANCE," "DOCTOR BREEN'S PRACTICE," "A FOREGONE CONCLUSION," ETC.

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A WOMAN'S REASON.

I.

THE day had been very oppressive, and at half-past five in the afternoon, the heat had scarcely abated, to the perception of Mr. Joshua Harkness, as he walked heavily up the Park Street mall in Boston Common. When he came opposite the Brewer Fountain, with its Four Seasons of severe drouth, he stopped short, and stared at the bronze group with its insufficient dribble, as if he had never seen it before. Then he felt infirmly about the ground with his stick, stepped aside, and sank tremulously into one of the seats at the edge of the path. The bench was already partly occupied by a young man and a young woman; the young man had his arm thrown along the back of the seat behind the young woman; their heads were each tilted toward the other, and they were making love almost as frankly in that public place as they might in the seclusion of a crowded railway train. They both glanced at the intruder, and exchanged smiles, apparently of pity for his indecency, and

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then went on with their love-making, while Mr. Harkness, unconscious of his offence, stared eagerly out over the Common, and from time to time made gestures or signals with his stick in that direction. It was that one day of the week when people are not shouted at by a multitude of surly sign-boards to keep off the grass, and the turf was everywhere dotted with lolling and lounging groups. Perhaps to compensate for the absence of the sign-boards (which would reappear over night like a growth of disagreeable fungi), there was an unusual number of policemen sauntering about, and it was one of these whom Mr. Harkness was trying to attract with his cane. If any saw him, none heeded, and he had to wait till a policeman came down the mall in front of him. This could not have been so long a time as it seemed to Mr. Harkness, who was breathing thickly, and now and then pressing his hand against his forehead, like one who tries to stay a reeling brain.

"Please call a carriage," he panted, as the officer whom he had thrust in the side with his cane stopped and looked down at him; and then as the man seemed to hesitate, he added: "My name is Harkness; I live at 9 Beacon Steps. I wish to go home at once; I 've been taken faint."

Beacon Steps is not Beacon Street, but it is of like blameless social tradition, and the name, together with a certain air of moneyed respectability in Mr. Harkness, had its effect with the policeman.

"Sick?" he asked. "Well, you *are* pale. You just hold on, a minute. Heh, there! heh!" he

shouted to a passing hackman, who promptly stopped, turned his horses, and drew up beside the curb next the Common. "Now you take my arm, Mr. Harkness, and I'll help you to the carriage." He raised the gentleman to his benumbed feet, and got him away through the gathering crowd; when he was gone, the crowd continued to hang about the place where he had been sitting in such numbers, that the young man first took his arm down from the back of the seat, and the young woman tilted her head away from his, and then they both, with vexed and impatient looks, rose and walked away, seeking some other spot for the renewal of their courtship.

The policeman had not been able to refrain from driving home with Mr. Harkness, whom he patronised with a sort of municipal kindness, on the way; and for whom, when he had got him in-doors, and comfortably stretched upon a lounge in the library, he wanted to go and call the doctor. But Mr. Harkness refused, saying that he had had these attacks before, and would soon be all right. He thanked the officer by name, after asking him for it, and the officer went away, leaving Mr. Harkness to the care of the cook who, in that midsummer time, seemed to have sole charge of the house and its master. The policeman flipped the dust from the breast and collar of his coat, in walking back to his beat, with the right feeling of a man who would like to be better prepared if summoned a second time to befriend a gentleman of Mr. Harkness's standing, and

to meet in coming out of his house a young lady of such beauty and elegance as he had just encountered. This young lady, as he closed the door behind him, had run up the steps with the loop of her train in one hand—after the fashion of ten years ago, and in the other a pretty travelling-bag, carried with the fearlessness of a lady who knows that people are out of town. She glanced a little wonderingly, a little defiantly, at the policeman, who, seeing that she must drop one or other of her burdens to ring, politely rang for her.

"*Thank* you!" said the young lady, speaking a little more wonderingly, a little more defiantly than she had looked.

"Quite welcome, Miss," returned the policeman, and touched his hat in going down the steps, while the young lady turned and stared after him, leaning a little over the top step on which she stood, with her back to the door. She was very pretty indeed, with blue eyes at once tender and honest, and the fair hair, that goes with their beauty, hanging loosely upon her forehead. Her cheeks, in their young perfection of outline, had a flush beyond their usual delicate colour; the heat, and her eager dash up the steps had suffused them with a dewy bloom, that seemed momently to deepen and soften. Her loveliness was saved from the insipidity of faultless lines by a little downward curve, a quirk, or call it dimple, at one corner of her mouth, which, especially in repose, gave it a touch of humorous feeling and formed its final charm: it seemed less a trait of face

than of character. That fine positive grace, which is called style, and which is so eminently the gift of exquisite nerves, had not cost her too much; she was slim, but not fragile, and her very motionlessness suggested a vivid bird-like mobility; she stood, as if she had alighted upon the edge of the step. At the opening of the door behind her she turned alertly from the perusal of the policeman's retreating back, and sprang within.

"How d' do, Margaret?" She greeted the cook in a voice whose bright kindness seemed the translation of her girlish beauty into sound. "Surprised to see me?" She did not wait for the cook's answer, but put down her bag, and began pulling off her gloves, after shaking out her skirt, and giving that penetrating sidelong downward look at it, which women always give their drapery at moments of arrival or departure. She turned into the drawing-room from the hall, and went up to the long, old-fashioned mirror, and glanced at the face which it dimly showed her in the close-shuttered room. The face had apparently not changed since she last saw it in that mirror, and one might have fancied that the young lady was somehow surprised at this.

"May I ask *why* policemen are coming and going in and out of our house, Margaret?" she demanded of the cook's image, which, further down in the mirror, hesitated at the doorway.

"He come home with your father, Miss Helen," answered the cook, and as Helen turned round and stared at her in the flesh, she continued: "He had

one of his faint turns in the Common. He 's laying down in the library now, Miss Helen."

"O, poor papa!" wailed the young lady, who knew that in spite of the cook's pronoun, it could not be the policeman who was then reposing from faintness in the library. She whirled away from the mirror, and swooped through the doorway into the hall, and back into the room where her father lay. "The heat has been too much for him," she moaned, in mixed self-reproach and compassion, as she flew; and she dropped upon her knees beside him, and fondly caressed his grey head, and cooed and lamented over him, with the irreverent tenderness he liked her to use with him. "Poor old fellow," she murmured. "It 's too bad! You 're working yourself to death, and I 'm going to stay with you now, and put a stop to your being brought home by policemen. Why, you ought to be ashamed, breaking down in this way, as soon as my back is turned! Has Margaret done everything for you? Wouldn't you like a little light?" She started briskly to her feet, flung up the long window, and raising and lowering the shade to get the right level for her father's eyes, stood silhouetted against the green space without: a grass plot between high brick walls, on one of which clambered a grape-vine, and on the other a wisteria, while a bed of bright-leafed plants gave its colour in the centre of the yard. "There!" she said, with a glance at this succinct landscape. "That 's the prettiest bit of nature I 've seen since I left Boston." She came back and sat down on a low

chair beside her father, who smiled fondly upon her, and took one of her hands to hold, while she pushed back his hair with the other.

"Are you awfully glad to see me?"

"Awfully," said Mr. Harkness, falling in with her mood, and brightening with the light and her presence. "What brought you so suddenly?"

"Oh, *that's* a long story. Are you feeling better, now?"

"Yes. I was merely faint. I shall be all right by morning. I've been a little worn out."

"Was it like the last time?" asked Helen.

"Yes," said her father.

"A little more like?"

"I don't think it was more severe," said Mr. Harkness, thoughtfully.

"What had you been doing? Honour bright, now: was it accounts?"

"Yes, it was accounts, my dear."

"The same old wretches?"

"The same old ones; some new ones, too. They're in hopeless confusion," sighed Mr. Harkness, who seemed to age and sadden with the thought.

"Well, now, I'll tell you what, papa," said Helen, sternly: "I want you to leave *all* accounts, old *and* new, quite alone till the cold weather comes. Will you promise?"

Harkness smiled, as wearily as he had sighed. He knew that she was burlesquing somewhat her ignorance of affairs; and yet it was not much burlesqued, after all; for her life, like that of other American

girls of prosperous parentage, had been almost as much set apart from the hard realities of bread-winning as the life of a princess, as entirely dedicated to society, to the studies that refine, and the accomplishments that grace society. The question of money had hardly entered into it. Since she was a little child, and used to climb upon her father's knee, and ask him, in order to fix his status in her fairy tales, whether he was rich or poor, she might be said never to have fairly thought of that matter. Of course, she understood that she was not so rich as some girls, but she had never found that the difference was against her in society; she could not help perceiving that in regard to certain of them it was in her favour, and that she might have patronised them if she had liked, and that they were glad of her friendship on any terms. Her father's great losses had come when she was too young to see the difference that they made in his way of living; ever since she could remember they had kept to the same scale of simple ease in the house where she was born, and she had known no wish that there had not been money enough to gratify. Pleasures of every kind had always come to her as freely and with as little wonder on her part as if they had been, like her youth, her bounding health, her beauty, the direct gift of heaven. She knew that the money came from her father's business, but she had never really asked herself how it was earned. It is doubtful if she could have told what his business was; it was the India trade, whatever that was, and of late years he

had seemed to be more worried by it than he used to be, and she had vaguely taken this ill, as an ungrateful return on the part of business. Once he had gone so far as to tell her that he had been hurt by the Great Fire somewhat. But the money for all her needs and luxuries (she was not extravagant, and really did not spend much upon herself) had come as before, and walking through the burnt district, and seeing how handsomely it had been rebuilt, she had a comforting sense that its losses had all been repaired.

"You look a little flushed and excited, my dear," said her father, in evasion of the commands laid upon him, and he touched her fair cheek. He was very fond of her beauty and of her style; in the earlier days of her young ladyhood, he used to go about with her a great deal, and was angry when he thought she did not get all the notice she ought, and a little jealous when she did.

"Yes, I *am* flushed and excited, papa," she owned, throwing herself back in the low chair she had pulled up to his sofa, and beginning to pluck nervously at those little tufts of silk that roughened the cob-webby fabric of the grey summer stuff she wore. "Don't you think," she asked, lifting her downcast eyes, "that coming home and finding you in this state is enough to make me look flushed and excited?"

"Not quite," said her father quietly. "It's not a new thing."

Helen gave a sort of lamentable laugh. "I

know I was humbugging, and I'm as selfish as I can be, to think more of myself even now than I do of you. But, oh papa! I'm *so* unhappy!" She looked at him through a mist that gathered and fell in silent drops from her eyes without clearing them, so that she did not see him carry the hand she had abandoned to his heart, and check a gasp. "I suppose we all have our accounts, one way or other, and they get confused like yours. Mine with—with—a certain person, had got so mixed up that there was nothing for it but just to throw them away."

"Do you mean that you have broken with him finally, Helen?" asked her father gravely.

"I don't know whether you call it *finally*," said Helen, "but I told him it was no use—not just in those words—and that he ought to forget me; and I was afraid I wasn't equal to it; and that I couldn't see my way to it clearly; and unless I could see my way clearly, I oughtn't to go on any longer. I wrote to him last week, and I thought—I thought that perhaps he wouldn't answer it; perhaps he would come over to Rye Beach—he could easily have run over from Portsmouth—to see me—about it. But he didn't—he didn't—he—wrote a very short letter—. Oh, I didn't see *how* he could write such a letter; I tried to spare *him* in every way; and yesterday he—he—s—s—sailed!" Here the storm broke, and Helen bowed herself to the sobs with which her slimness shook, like a tall flower beaten in the wind. Then she suddenly stopped, and ran

her hand into her pocket, and pulled out her handkerchief. She wiped away her tears, and waited for her father to speak; but he lay silent, and merely regarded her pitifully. "I couldn't bear it any longer there with those geese of Merrills—I 'm sure they were as kind as could be—and so I came home to burden and afflict you, papa. Don't you think that was like me?" She gave her lamentable laugh again, sobbed, laughed once more, dried the fresh tears with her handkerchief, which she had mechanically shaped into a rabbit, and sat plucking at her dress as before. "What do people do, papa," she asked presently, with a certain hoarseness in her voice, "when they 've thrown away their accounts?"

"I never heard of their doing it, my dear," said her father.

"Well, but when they 've come to the very end of everything, and there's nothing to go on with, and they might as well stop?"

"They go into bankruptcy," answered the old man, absently, as if the thought had often been in his mind before.

"Well, that 's what I 've gone into—bankruptcy," said Helen. "And what do they do after they 've gone into bankruptcy?"

"They begin the world again with nothing, if they have the heart," replied her father.

"That 's what I have to do then—begin the world again with nothing! There! my course is clear, and I hope I like it, and I hope I 'm satisfied!"

With these words of self-reproach, Helen again

broke down, and bowed herself over the ruin she had made of her life.

"I don't think you need despair," said her father, soothingly, yet with a sort of physical effort which escaped her self-centred grief. "Robert is such a good fellow that if you wrote to him—"

"Why, papa! Are you crazy?" shouted the young girl. "Write to him? He 's off for three years, and I don't think he 'd come posting back from China, if I *did* write to him. And how *could* I write to him, even if he were in the next room?"

"It wouldn't be necessary, in that case," said her father. "I 'm sorry he 's gone for so long," he added, rather absently.

"If he were gone for a *day*, it couldn't make any difference," cried Helen, inexorably. "I argued it all out,—and it 's a perfect chain of logic—before I wrote to him. I looked at it in this way. I said to myself that it was no use having the affair off and on, any longer. It would be perfect misery to a person of my temperament to be an officer's wife, and have my husband with me to-day and at the ends of the earth to-morrow. Besides, his pay wouldn't support us. You told me that yourself, papa."

"Yes," said Mr. Harkness. "But I thought Robert might leave the navy, and—"

"I never would have let him!" Helen burst in. "He would have been as unhappy as a fish out of water, and I wouldn't have his wretchedness on my conscience, and his idleness—you know how long that splendid Captain Seymour was trying to get into

business in Boston, after he left the service: and then he had to go to California before he could find anything to do; and do you suppose I was going to have Robert mooning round in that way, for ages?"

"He might have gone into business with me for the time being," said Mr. Harkness, not very hopefully.

"Oh yes! you could have *made* a place for him, I know! And we should both have been a burden to you, then. But I shouldn't have cared for all that. I would have met any fate with Robert, if I had believed that I felt toward him just as I should. But, don't you see, papa? If I had felt towards him in that way, I never should have thought of any—any—prudential considerations. That was what convinced me, that was what I couldn't escape from, turn which way I would. That was the point I put to Robert himself, and—and—oh, I don't see how he could answer as he did! I *don't* see how he could!" Helen convulsively clutched something in the hand which she had thrust into her pocket. "It isn't that I care for myself; but oh, I am so sorry for him, away off there all alone, feeling so hard and bitter towards me, and thinking me heartless, and I don't know what all,—and hating me so."

"What did he say, Helen?" asked her father, tenderly. She snatched her hand from her pocket and laid a paper, crumpled, bewept, distained, in the hand he stretched towards her, and then bowed her face upon her knees.

Helen and her father were old confidants, and she had not more reluctance in showing him this letter

than most girls would have had in trusting such a paper to their mother's eyes. Her own mother had died long ago, and in the comradeship of her young life her father had entered upon a second youth, happier, or at least tranquiller, than the first. She adored him and petted him, as a wife could not, and this worship did not spoil him as it might if it had been a conjugal devotion. They had always a perfect understanding; she had not withdrawn her childish intimacy of thought and feeling from him to give it to her mother, as she would have done if her mother had lived; he knew all her small heart affairs without asking, more or less in a tacit way; and she had an abidingly grateful sense of his wisdom in keeping her from follies which she could see she had escaped through it. He had never before so directly sought to know her trouble; but he had never before seen her in so much trouble; besides, he had always been Robert Fenton's friend at court with Helen; and he had quietly kept his hopes of their future through rather a stormy and uncertain present.

He liked Robert for the sake of Robert's father, who had been captain and supercargo of one of Harkness and Co.'s ships, and had gone down in her on her home voyage when he was returning to be junior partner in the house, after a prosperous venture of his own in Wenham ice. He left this boy, and a young wife who died soon afterwards. Then Mr. Harkness, who was the boy's guardian, gave him and the small property that remained to

him more than a guardian's care. He sent him to school, but he made him at home in his own house on all holidays and in vacation. These sojourns and absences, beginning when Robert was ten years old, and continuing through his school-boy age, had renewed alternately his intimacy and strangeness with Helen, and kept her a mystery and enchantment which grew with his growth, while to her consciousness he was simply Robert, a nice boy, who was now at school, or now at home, and who was often so shy that it was perfectly silly. When he was old enough to be placed in some career he was allowed to choose Harvard and a profession afterwards, or any more technical training that he liked better. He chose neither: the sea called him, as the old superstition is, and every nerve in his body responded. He would have liked to go into the trade in which his father had died, but here his guardian overruled him. He knew that the India trade was dying out. If Robert's soul was set upon the sea, of which there seemed no doubt, it was better that he should go into the navy; at Annapolis he would have a thorough schooling, which would stand him in good stead, if future chance or choice ever cast him ashore to live.

Helen was in the sophomore year of the class with which she was dancing through Harvard when Robert came home from his first cruise. She was then a very great lady, and she patronised the midshipman with killing kindness as a younger brother, though he was in fact half a year her senior. He

now fell in love with her outright: very proud love, very jealous, very impatient. She could not understand it. She said to her father it was so *queer*. She never *thought* of such a thing. Why, *Robert!* It was *absurd*. Besides, he had such a funny name; *Fenton!* But a passion like his was not to be quenched with reasons even so good as these. He went to sea again, bitterly, rapturously brooding over her idea, and came home in the autumn after Helen's class-day. All the fellows had scattered now; and she was left much younger and humbler in her feelings, and not so great a lady for all her triumphs. Two of her class had proposed to her, and lots had come near it; but her heart had been left untouched, and she perceived, or thought she perceived, that these young gentlemen, who were wise and mature enough for their age, though neither Solomons nor Methuselahs, were all silly boys. In herself, on the contrary, the tumult of feeling with which she had first entered the world had been succeeded by a calm, which she might well have mistaken for wisdom. She felt that she now knew the world thoroughly, and while she was resolved to judge it kindly, she was not going to be dazzled by it any longer. She had become an observer of human nature; she analysed her feelings; sometimes she made cutting remarks to people, and was dreadfully sorry for it. She withdrew a great deal from society, and liked being thought odd. She had begun to take lessons in painting with a number of ladies under an artist's criticism; she took up

courses of reading; she felt that life was a serious affair. On his return, Robert at first seemed to her more boyish, more brotherly than before. But in talking with him certain facts of his history came out that showed him a very brave and manly fellow, and good, too. This gave her pause; so keen an observer of human nature at once discerned in this young man, who did not brag of his experiences, nor yet affect to despise them as trifles, but honestly owned that at one time he was scared, and that at another he would have given everything to be ashore, an object worthy of her closest and most reverent study. She proceeded to idealise him, and to stand in awe of him. Oh *yes!* with a deep sighing breath, and a long dreamy look at him —*he!* What *he* had been through must have changed the whole *world* to him. After that night in the *typhoon—well*, nothing could ever have been the same to *her* after that. He must find all the interests at home sickeningly mean. This was the tone she took with him, driving him to despair. When he again urged his suit, she said that she could not see why he should care for her. At the same time she wanted to ask him why he did not wear his uniform ashore, instead of that unnatural civil dress that he seemed so anxious to make himself ridiculous in. Being pressed for some sort of answer, she said that she had resolved never to marry. After this Robert went off very melancholy upon his third cruise. But she wrote him such kind and sympathetic letters that he came

home from this cruise, which was a short one, more fondly in love than ever, but more patiently, more pleasingly in love; and he now behaved so sensibly, with so much apparent consideration for her uncertainty of mind, that she began to think seriously of him. But though she liked him ever so much, and respected him beyond anything, the very fact that she was wondering whether she could ask him to leave the navy or not, and where and how they should live, seemed sufficient proof to her that she did not care for him in the right way. Love, she knew, did not consider ways and means; it did not stop to argue; it found in itself its own reason and the assurance of a future. It did not come after years of shilly-shallying, and beating about the bush, and weighing this and that, and scrutiny of one's emotions. If she loved Robert so little as to care what happened after they were married, she did not love him at all. Something like this, but expressed with infinite kindness was what she had written from Rye Beach to Robert stationed at Portsmouth. She ended by leaving the case in his hands. She forbade him to hope, but she told him that there *had* been a time, a moment, when she thought that she might have loved him.

Robert took all this awry. He did not deign to ask her when this mysterious moment was, far less whether it might ever recur; he did not answer one of her arguments; he did not even come over to Rye Beach to combat and trample on her reasons. He wrote her a furious, foolish reply, in which he

agreed with her that she had never loved him, and never would, and he bade her farewell. He managed to exchange with a friend who was bemoaning his hard lot in being ordered away from his young wife to the China station, and he sailed with their blessing three days after getting Helen's letter. She only learned of his departure by chance.

The old man held the letter in his hand, after reading it, for so long a time, that at last Helen looked up. "It seems to me you take it pretty coolly, papa," she said, her lips quivering.

"Yes, yes. Poor Robert! poor boy!" sighed her father. Then while she bridled indignantly at his misplaced compassion, he added, "I'm sorry, Helen. I think you would have come to like him. Well, well! If you are contented, my dear—"

"How can you *say* such a thing, papa?" cried Helen, astonished that he should have taken what he understood of her letter just as Robert had done, "when you know,—when you know I—" but Helen could not finish what she was going to say. She could not own that she thought her letter susceptible of quite a different answer. She set her lips and tried to stop their trembling, while her eyes filled.

Her father did not notice. "My dear," he said presently, "will you ask Margaret to make me a cup of tea? I feel unpleasantly weak."

"Why, papa!" cried Helen, flying to the bell, "why didn't you tell me before, instead of letting me worry you with all this foolishness? why didn't you *say* you were not so well?"

"I wasn't thinking of it," said her father, meekly accepting her reproof. "It's nothing. The wind has changed, hasn't it? I feel the east a little."

"You're *chilly?*" Helen was now tempted to be really harsh with him for his remissness, but she did not stay from running after the wrap, soft and light, which she had brought back from the sea-side with her, and had thrown down with her bag in the hall, and though she bemoaned his thoughtlessness, as she flung it over him, still she did not pour out upon him all the self-reproach in her heart. She went and hurried Margaret with the tea, and then set an old-fashioned tea-poy beside the sofa, and when the tea came, she drew up her chair, and poured it for him. She offered to pull down the window, but he made her a sign to let it be; and in fact, it was not cooler without than within, and no chill came from the little yard, on whose lofty walls the sunset was beginning to burn in tender red light. She poured herself a cup of tea when she came back, and when she had made her father repeat again and again that he felt much better, she began to see the absurdity of being tragic about Robert at this late day, when she had so often refused him before without the least tragedy. This, to be sure, was not quite like the other refusals; not so one-sided; but really, except for Robert's own sake, what had she to be sorry for, and why should she pity his towering dudgeon? An ache, faint and dull, made itself felt deep in her heart, and she answered sadly, "Well," to her father's tentative "Helen."

He did not go on, and she asked presently, "What is it, papa?"

"Oh, nothing. There was something I was going to speak to you about. But it will do another time." Helen recollected that once or twice before this her father had begun in the same way, and postponed whatever he had been going to say in the same fashion. It was not a thing to be curious about, and she had never pressed him to speak. She knew that he would speak when he really thought best. But she wondered now a little if his mind were still running upon Robert.

"Was it something in regard to—to—me, papa?"

"Why, yes. Yes; indirectly."

"Well, then, don't think of it any more. I shall not. I'm sorry I worried you about it."

"About what, my dear?" asked her father, who could not have followed her.

"Robert!" said Helen, abruptly.

"Oh! I wasn't thinking about Robert."

"Because, if you were, papa, I want to tell you that I am quite reconciled to have everything end as it has done. Robert and I will always be good friends. You needn't be troubled about that."

"Oh yes, certainly," assented her father, closing his eyes.

Helen sat looking at him, as if she would like to go on. But she was a little ashamed, and a little piqued that her father should shut his eyes in that way while she was talking of Robert. He had taken the whole affair rather oddly. She had been prepared

to defend Robert if her father were angry with him, as she expected; but instead of being angry, he had really seemed to side with Robert, and had somehow, by his reticence, implied that he would have been glad to have her humble herself to Robert.

"If you wish to sleep, papa," she said with a dignity wasted upon him, for he still lay with his eyes closed, "I will go away."

"I 'm drowsy," said her father. "But don't go, Helen. Sit down here."

He made a motion for her to sit beside him, and after an instant's further resentment she drew up her chair, and laid her beautiful head down upon the cushion by his. She gave him a kiss, and dropped a large tear against his withered cheek, and wiped it away with her handkerchief, and then she hid her face again, and wept peacefully till all her tears were gone. At last she lifted her face, and dried her eyes, and sat dreamily watching the red sunset light creeping up the wall on which the wisteria clambered. It rose slowly, leaf by leaf, till it lit an airy frond at top, that swayed in it like a pennon. Suddenly it leaped from this and left it dark, and a shiver coursed through the next rank of foliage. It somehow made her think of a ship going down below the horizon, and the waves running along the sky where the streamers had just hung. But Robert must have been out of sight of land for two days and more before that.

II.

HELEN sat beside her father, while the solitude of the house deepened from silence to silence. Then Margaret came to the door, and looked in as if to ask whether it was not time for her to fetch away the tea-things. Helen gave her a nod of acquiescence, and presently rose, and followed her out to the kitchen, to tell her that she was going to her own room, and to say that she must be called when her father woke. But in the kitchen Margaret's company was a temptation to her loneliness, and she made one little pretext after another for remaining, till Margaret set her a chair in the doorway. Margaret had been in the house ever since Helen was born, and Helen still used the same freedom with her that she had in childhood, and gave herself the range of places to which young ladyhood ordinarily denies its radiant presence. She had indeed as much intimacy with the cook as could consist with their different ages, and she got on smoothly with the cook's temper, which had not been so good as her looks in youth, and had improved quite as little with age. Margaret was of a remote sort of Irish birth; but her native land had scarcely marked her accent, and but for her

church and her sense of place, which was sometimes very respectful and sometimes very high and mighty with those above her, she might have been mistaken for an American; she had a low voice which only grew lower as she grew angry. A family in which she could do all the work had been her ideal when she first came to Boston, but she had failed of this now for some thirty years, and there seemed little hope that the chances would still turn in her favour. In Helen's childhood, when she used to ask Margaret in moments of tenderness, following the gift of dough in unexpected quantity, whether she would come and live with her after she got married, Margaret had always answered, "Yes, if you won't have anyone else bothering round," which was commonly too much for the just pride of the actual second-girl. She had been cook in the family so long ago as when Mr. Harkness had kept a man; she had pressed upon the retreat of the last man with a broom in her hand and a joyful sarcasm on her lips; and she would willingly have kept vacant the place that she had made too hot for a long succession of second-girls. In the intervals of their going and coming, she realised her ideal of domestic service for the time being; and in the summer when Helen was away a good deal, she prolonged these intervals to the utmost. She was necessarily much more the housekeeper than Helen, though they both respected a fiction of contrary effect, and Helen commonly left her the choice of her helpers. She had not been surprised to find Margaret alone in the house, but

she thought it well to ask her how she was getting on without anybody.

"Oh, very well, Miss Helen! You know your father don't make any trouble."

"Well, I've come now, and we must get somebody," said Helen.

"Why, I thought you was going back on Monday, Miss Helen," answered Margaret.

"No, I shall not leave papa. I think he's not at all well."

"He does seem rather poorly, Miss Helen. But I don't see why you need any one, in the summer, this way."

"Who's to go to the door?" asked Helen. "Besides, you couldn't take care of both of us, Margaret."

"Just as you say, Miss Helen; *I'd* just as lives," answered Margaret, stubbornly. "It isn't for me to say; but I don't see what you want with anybody: you won't see a soul."

"O, you never can tell, Margaret. You've had a good rest now, and you must have somebody to help you." Helen's sadness smiled at this confusion of ideas, and its suitableness to Margaret's peculiar attitude. "Get somebody that you know, Margaret, and that you'll like. But we must have somebody." She regarded Margaret's silent and stiff displeasure with a moment's amusement, and then her bright face clouded; and she asked softly: "Did you know, Margaret, that Robert,—that Lieutenant Fenton—had sailed again?"

"Why, no, Miss Helen! You don't mean that? Why, I thought he was going to stay the summer at Portsmouth."

"He was," said Helen, in the same low voice, "but he changed his mind, it seems."

"Sailors is a roving set, anyway," Margaret generalised. Then she added: "Did he come down to say good-bye to your father?"

"Why, no," sadly answered Helen, who now thought of this for the first time. Her heart throbbed indignantly; then she reflected that she had kept him from coming. She looked up at the evening blue, with the swallows weaving a woof of flight across the top of the space framed in by the high walls on every hand, and "He hadn't time, I suppose," she said sadly. "He couldn't get off."

"Well, I don't call it very nice, his not coming," persisted Margaret. "I'd 'a' deserted first." Her associations with naval service had been through gallant fellows who were not in a position to resign.

Helen smiled so ruefully at this that she would better for cheerfulness have wept. But she recognised Margaret's limitations as a confidant, and said no more. She rose presently, and again asked Margaret to look in pretty soon, and see if her father were awake, and call her, if he were: she was going to her room. She looked in a moment herself as as she went, and listened till she heard him breathing, and so passed on through the drawing-room, and trailed heavily up-stairs.

The house was rather old-fashioned, and it was

not furnished in the latest taste, but it made the appeal with which things out of date, or passing out of date, touch the heart. It was in fact beginning to be respectable because it was no longer in the contest for effect, which the decorations of the newer houses carried on about it, and there was a sort of ugly keeping throughout.

In the very earliest days of Mr. Harkness's housekeeping, the ornamentation of his home had reflected the character of his business somewhat. There had been even a time when the young supercargo brought back—it was his first voyage—quaint and beautiful shells from the East, for his wife to set about the tables and mantels; but these objects, so exquisite in themselves, so unyielding in composition, had long since disappeared. Some grotesque bronzes, picked up in Chinese ports, to which his early ventures had taken him, survived the expulsion of ivory carvings and Indian idols and *genre* statuettes in *terra cotta*, (like those you see in the East Indian Museum at Salem) and now found themselves, with the new feeling for oriental art, in the very latest taste. The others were bestowed in neglected drawers and shelves, along with boxes containing a wealth of ghastly rich and elaborate white crape shawls from China, and fantastically subtle cotton webs from India which Helen had always thought she should use in tableaux, and never had worn. Among the many pictures on the walls (there were too many), there were three Stuarts, the rest were of very indifferent merit; large figure paintings, or allegorical landscapes,

after the taste of Cole and Poussin, in great carved and scrolly frames. Helen had once thought of making a raid upon these enemies of art, and in fact she had contemplated remodelling the whole equipment of the parlours, in conformity to the recent feeling in such matters; but she had not got further than the incomplete representation of some golden-rod and mullein-stalks upon the panels of her own chamber-door; and now that the fervour of her first enthusiasm had burnt itself out, she was not sorry she had left the old house in peace.

"*Oh*, I should think you 'd *be* so rejoiced," said the chief of her friends; "it 's such a comfort to go into *one* house where you don't have to admire the artistic sentiment, and where every wretched little æsthetic prig of a table or a chair isn 't asserting a principle or teaching a lesson. Don't touch a cobweb, Helen!" It had never even come to a talk between her and her father, and the house remained unmolested the home of her childhood. She had not really cared much for it since she was a child. The sense of our impermanent relation to the parental roof comes to us very early in life; and perhaps more keenly to a young girl than to her brothers. They are of the world by all the conditions of their active, positive being, almost from the first—a great world that is made for them; but she has her world to create. She cannot sit and adorn her father's house, as she shall one day beautify and worship her husband's; she can indeed do her duty by it, but the restless longing remains, and her housewifeliness

does not voluntarily blossom out beyond the precincts of her own chamber, which she makes her realm of fancy and of dreams. She could not be the heart of the house if she would, as her mother is, or has been; and though in her mother's place, she can be housekeeper, thrifty, wise, and notable, still some mysterious essential is wanting which it is not in her nature to supply to her father's house.

Helen went to her own room, and, flinging up the windows, let in the noises of the streets. A few feet went by in the secluded place, and a sound of more frequent trampling came from the street into which it opened. Further off rose the blurred tumult of business, softened by the stretch of the Common, and growing less and less with the lapse of the long summer day. It was already a little cooler, and the smell of the sprinkled street stole refreshingly in at the window. It was still very light, and when Helen opened her blinds, the room brightened cheerfully all about her, and the sympathetic intimacy of her own closest belongings tenderly appealed to her. After something has happened, and we first see familiar things about us as they were, there comes, just before the sense of difference in ourselves returns to torment us, a moment of blind and foolish oblivion, and this was Helen's as she sat down beside the window, and looked round upon the friendly prettiness of her room. It had been her room when she was a child, and there were childish keepsakes scattered about in odd places, out of the way of young-ladyish luxuries, high-shouldered bottles of perfume, and long-handled ivory

brushes, and dainty boxes and cases, and starred and bevelled hand-glasses, and other sacred mysteries of toilet. Of the period when she had thought herself wedded to art there were certain charcoal sketches pinned against the wall, and in one corner, not very definite at first glance under the draperies tossed upon it from time to time, was her easel. On projections of her mirror-frame hung souvenirs of Robert's first cruise, which had been in the Mediterranean : ropes of Roman pearls; nets and bracelets and necklaces of shells and beads from Venice ; filigree silver jewellery from Genoa; strands and rosaries of black, barbarically scented wooden beads from the Levant : not things you could wear at all, but very pleasant to have ; they gave a sentiment to your room when you brought any one into it; they were nice to have lying about, and people liked to take them into their hands : they were not so very uncommon, either, that you had to keep telling what they were. She had never thought that possibly Robert had expected her to wear the absurd things. With an aching recurrence to their quarrel (it could be called no less) and a penitent self-pity, she thought of it now. It did not seem to her that she could touch them, but she went languidly to the mirror and took some of them down, and then all at once fantastically began to array herself in them : like a mad girl, she reflected. She threw the loops of Roman pearls and the black strands of Levantine beads about her neck ; she set a net of the Venetian shell-work on her hair, and decked her wrists and her lovely ears with the Genoese filigree; a

perfectly frantic combination, she mused, as she shook her head a little to make the ear-bobs dance. "Yes, perfectly frantic," she said aloud, but not much thinking of the image confronting her from the mirror, thinking rather of Robert, and poignantly regretting that she had never put them on for him; and thinking that if the loss of him had made her certain about him too late for ever, how fatally strange that would be. Again she went over all the facts of the affair, and was able to make much surer of Robert's motives than of her own. She knew that if he had understood her saying that she might have loved him once to be any encouragement for the future, he would not have written as he did. She could imagine Robert's being very angry at the patronising tone of the rest of her letter; she had entire faith in his stupidity; she never doubted his generosity, his magnanimous incapability of turning her refusal of him into a refusal of her; his was not the little soul that could rejoice in such a chance. She wondered if now, far out at sea, sailing, sailing away, three years away, from her, he saw anything in her letter but refusal; or was he still in that blind rage? Did he never once think that it had seemed such a great thing for her to make confession, which meant him to come to her? But had she really meant that? It seemed so now, but perhaps then she had only thought of mingling a drop of kindness in his bitter cup, of trying to spare him the mortification of having loved a person who had never thought for a moment of loving him? From time to time, her image appeared to advance

upon her from the depths of the mirror, decked in all that incongruous frippery, and to say with trembling lips, "Perfectly frantic, perfectly frantic," while the tears ran down its face; and she found a wild comfort in regarding herself as quite an insane, irresponsible creature, who did not know what she was about. She felt that fate ought not to hold her to account. The door-bell rang, and she snatched the net from her hair with a fearful shudder, and flung down all the ornaments in a heap upon her dressing-table. Bumping sounds in the hall below reminded her that in her trance before the glass, she had remotely known of a wagon stopping at the door, and presently she heard Margaret coming up the stairs behind the panting express-man who was fetching up her trunk. She fled into another room, and guiltily lurked there till they went out again, before she returned to unlock and unpack the box. It was one of Helen's economies not to drive home from the station, but to send her baggage by express and come up in a horse-car. The sums thus saved she devoted to a particular charity, and was very rigid with herself about spending every half-dollar coach-fare for that object. She only gave twenty-five cents to the express, and she made a merit of the fact that neither the coach-hire nor the charity ever cost her father anything. Robert had once tried to prove that it always cost him seventy-five cents, but she had easily seen through the joke, and had made him confess it.

She was still busy unpacking when Margaret came

up to say that her father was awake now, and then she left off at once to go to him. The gas had been lighted in the hall and library, and that made life another thing. Her father was in his arm-chair, and was feeling decidedly better, he said; he had told Margaret to have tea there in the library. Helen laughed at him for having two teas within two hours; he owned to being hungry, and that reminded her that she had eaten nothing since an early dinner. When the tea and toast came in, and the cloth was laid half across the round table, in the mellow light of the study lamp, they were very cosy. Helen, who was always thinking of Robert, whatever else she thought of, began to play in fancy at a long life of devotion to her father, in which she should never marry. She had always imagined him living with her, but now she was living with him, and they were to grow old together; in twenty years, when he was eighty, she would be forty-three, and then there would not be much difference between them. She now finally relinquished the very last idea of Robert, except as a brother. She did not suppose she should ever quite like his wife, but she should pet their children.

"Helen," said her father, breaking in upon these ideas, "how should you like to live in the country?"

"Why, papa, I was just thinking of it! That is, not in the country exactly, but somewhere off by ourselves, just you and I. Of course, I should like it."

"I don't mean on a farm," pursued her father,

"but in some of the suburban towns, where we could have a bit of ground and breathing space. I think it grows closer and closer in town; at times it seems as if I could hardly catch my breath. I believe it would agree with me in the country. I can't get away from business entirely for a few years yet—if the times continue so bad, I must bend all my energies to it, in fact—and I have a fancy that the coming in and out of town would do me good. And I have a notion that I should like to build. I should like a new house—a perfectly new house. We could live on a simpler scale in the country."

"O yes, indeed!" said Helen. "I should come into town to shop, with my initials worked in worsted on the side of my bag, and I should know where the bargains were, and lunch at Copeland's. *I* should like it."

"Well, we must think about it. I daresay we could let the house here without much trouble. I feel it somehow a great burden upon me, but I shouldn't like to sell it."

"O no, papa! We couldn't think of selling it. I should just like to let it, and then never go near it, or look in the same direction, till we were ready to come back to it."

"I have lived here so long," continued her father, making her the listener to his musings rather than speaking to her, "that I should like a change. I used to think that I should never leave the house, but a place may become overcrowded with associations. You are too young, Helen, to understand

how terrible it is to find one's own past grow into the dumb material things about one, and become, as it were, imprisoned in them."

"O yes," sighed the girl, "there are some dresses of mine that I can't bear the sight of, just because I felt, or said, or did certain things when I wore them."

"An old house like this," Mr. Harkness went on, "gets to be your body, and usurps all your reality, which doesn't seem to live in it either, while you move round like a ghost. The past is so much more than the present. Think how much more these walls and these old chairs and tables have known of us than we now are!"

"No, no! Don't think of it, papa, or we shall be getting into the depths again," pleaded Helen.

"Well, I won't," consented her father, coming back to himself with a smile, which presently faded. "But it all makes me restless and impatient. I should like to begin a new life somewhere else, in a new house." He was silent a while, trifling with the toast on his plate; his appetite had passed at the sight of the food, and he had eaten scarcely anything. He looked at Helen, and then at a portrait on the wall, and than at Helen again.

"I'm not much like mamma, am I, papa?" she asked.

"Not much in face," said Mr. Harkness.

"Do you wish I was more?" she pursued timidly.

"No, I don't think I do," said her father.

"It would only make me more painful, if I looked

more like her, such a helpless, selfish thing as I am," morbidly assented Helen. "I should only make you miss her the more."

"Why, Helen, you 're a very good girl—the best child in the world," said her father.

"O no, I'm not, papa. I'm one of the worst. I never think of anybody but myself," said Helen, who was thinking of Robert. "You don't know how many times I 've gone down on my mental knees to you and asked you to have patience with me."

"Asked *me* to have patience with you?" said her father, taking her by the chin, and pressing against his cheek the beautiful face which she leaned toward him. "Poor child! There 's hardly a day since you were born that I haven't done you a greater wrong than the sum of all your sins would come to. Papas are dreadful fellows, Helen; but they sometimes live in the hope of repairing their misdeeds."

"Write them on a slip of paper, and hide it in a secret drawer that opens with a clasp and spring, when you don't know they 're there," said Helen, glad of his touch of playfulness. "We 've both been humbugging, and we know it."

He stared at her and said, "Your voice is like your mother's; and just now, when you came in, your movement was very like hers. I hadn't noticed it before. But she has been a great deal in my mind of late."

If he had wished to talk of her mother, whom Helen could not remember, and who had been all her life

merely the shadow of a sorrow to her, a death, a grave, a name upon a stone, a picture on the wall, she would not spare herself the duty of encouraging him to do so. "Was she tall, like me?" she asked.

"Not so tall," answered her father. "And she was dark."

"Yes," said Helen, lifting her eyes to the picture on the wall.

"She had a great passion for the country," continued Mr. Harkness, "and I liked the town. It was more convenient for me, and I was born in Boston. It has often grieved me to think that I didn't yield to her. I must have been dreaming of her, for when I woke a little while ago, this regret was like a physical pang at my heart. As long as we live, we can't help treating each other as if we were to live always. But it 's a mistake. I never refused to go into the country with her," he said as if to appease this old regret. "I merely postponed it. Now I should like to go."

He rose from the table, and taking the study-lamp in his hand, he feebly pushed apart the sliding-doors that opened into the drawing-room. He moved slowly down its length, on one side, throwing the light upon this object and that, before which he faltered, and so returned on the other side, as if to familiarise himself with every detail. Sometimes he held the lamp above, and sometimes below his face, but always throwing its age and weariness into relief. Helen had remained watching him. As he came back she heard him say, less to her as it seemed than

to himself, "Yes, I should like to sell it. I 'm tired of it."

He set the lamp down upon the table again, and sank into his chair, and lapsed into a reverie which left Helen solitary beside him. "Ah," she realised, as she looked on his musing, absent face, "he is old and I am young, and he has more to love in the other world, with my mother and both my brothers there, than he has in this. Oh, Robert, Robert, Robert!"

But perhaps his absent mind was not so much bent upon the lost as she thought. He had that way fathers have of treating his daughter as an equal, of talking to her gravely and earnestly, and then of suddenly dropping her into complete nothingness, as if she were a child to be amused for a while, and then set down from his knee and sent out of doors. Helen dutifully accepted this condition of their companionship; she cared for it so little as never to have formulated it to herself; when she was set down she went out, and ordinarily she did not think of it.

A peremptory ring at the door startled them both, and when Margaret had opened it there entered all at the same instant, a loud, kindly voice, the chirp of boots, heavily trodden upon by a generous bulk, that rocked from side to side in its advance, and a fragrance of admirable cigars, that active and passive perfume, which comes from smoking and being smoked in the best company. "At home, Margaret?" asked the voice, whose loudness was a

husky loudness, in a pause of the boots. "Yes? Well, don't put me in there, Margaret," which was apparently in rejection of the drawing-room. "I'll join them in the library."

The boots came chirping down the hall in that direction, with a sound of heavy breathing. Helen sprang from her chair, and fled to meet the cheerful sound; there was the noise of an encountering kiss, and a jolly laugh, and "Well, Helen!" and "Oh, Captain Butler!" and later, "Harkness!" and "Butler!" as Helen led the visitor in.

"Well!" said this guest, for the third time. He straightened his tall mass to its full height, and looked out over his chest with eyes of tender regard upon Harkness's thin and refined face, now lit up after the hand-shaking with cordial welcome. "Do you know," he said, as if somehow it were a curious fact of natural history, "that you have it uncommonly close in here?" He went over to the window that opened upon the little grassy yard, and put it up for himself, while Harkness was explaining that it had been put down while he was napping. Then he planted himself in a large leathern chair beside it, and went on smoking the cigar on the end of which he had been chewing. He started from the chair with violence, coughing and gesturing to forbid Helen, who was hospitably whispering to Margaret. "No, no; don't do it. I won't have anything. I couldn't. I've just dined at the club. Yes, you may do that much," he added to Helen, as she set a little table with an ash-holder at his elbow. "You've

no idea what a night it is. It 's cooler, and the air's delicious. I say, I want to take Helen back with me. I wish she 'd go alone, and leave us two old fellows together here. There 's no place like Boston in the summer, after all. But you haven't told me whether you 're surprised to see me." Captain Butler looked round at them with something of the difficulty of a sea-turtle in a lateral inspection.

"Never surprised, but always charmed," said Helen, with just the shade of mockery in her tone which she knew suited this visitor.

"Charmed, eh?" asked Captain Butler. Apparently he meant to say something satirical about the word, but could not think of anything. He turned again to her father: "How are you, Harkness?"

"Oh, I 'm very well," said Harkness evasively. "I 'm as well as usual."

"Then you have yourself fetched home in a hack by a policeman every day, do you?" remarked Captain Butler, blowing a succession of white rings into the air. "You were seen from the club window. I 'll tell you what; you 're sticking to it too close."

"O yes, Captain Butler, *do* get him away," sighed Helen, while her father, who had not sat down, began to walk back and forth in an irritated, restless way.

"For the present I can't leave it," said Harkness, fretfully. He added more graciously: "Perhaps in a week or two, or next month, I can get off for a few days. You know I was one of the securities for Bates and Mather," he said, looking at Captain Butler over Helen's head.

"I had forgotten that," answered Captain Butler gravely.

"They left things in a complete tangle. I can't tell just where I am yet, and, of course, I've no peace till I know."

"Of course," assented Captain Butler. "I won't vex you with retroactive advice, Joshua," he added affectionately, "but I hope you won't do anything of that kind again."

"No, Jack, I won't. But you know under the circumstances it would have been black ingratitude to refuse."

"Yes," said Captain Butler. He smoked a while in silence. Then he said, "I suppose it 's no worse with the old trade than with everything else, at present."

"No, we 're all in the same boat, I believe," said Harkness.

"How is Marian?" asked Helen, a little restive under the cross firing.

"Oh, Marian 's all right. But if she were not, she wouldn't know it."

"I suppose she 's very *much* engaged," said Helen, with a faint pang of something like envy.

"Yes," said Captain Butler. "I thought you were at Rye Beach, young lady."

"I thought you were at Beverley, old gentleman," retorted Helen; she had been saucy to Captain Butler from infancy.

"So I was. But I came up unexpectedly to-day."

"So did I."

"Did you? Good! Now I'll tell you why *I* came, and you shall tell me why *you* did. I came because I got to thinking of your father, and had a fancy I should like to see him. Did you?"

Helen hung her head. "No," she said at length.

The Captain laughed. "Whom had you a fancy to see here, then, at this time of year?"

"Oh, I didn't say I should tell. You made that bargain all yourself," mocked Helen. "But it was very kind of you to come on papa's account," she added softly.

"What are you making there?" asked the Captain, bending forward to look at the work Helen had taken into her lap.

"Who—I?" she asked, as if she had perhaps been asked what Robert was making. Her mind had been running upon him since Captain Butler asked her why she had come up to Boston. "Oh!" she recovered herself. "Why, this," she said, taking the skeleton frame-work of gauze and wire on her finger-tips, and holding it at arm's-length, with her head aslant surveying it, "this is a bonnet for Margaret."

"A bonnet, hey?" said the Captain. "It looks like a Shaker cap."

"Yes?" Helen clapped it on her head, and looked jauntily at the captain, dropping her shoulders, and putting her chin out. "Now, does it?"

"No, not now. The Shaker sisters don't wear crimps, and they don't smile in that wicked way." Helen laughed, and took the bonnet-frame off. "So

you make Margaret's bonnets, do you? Do you make your own?"

"Sometimes. Not often. But I like millinery. It 's what I should turn to if I were left to take care of myself."

"I 'm afraid you wouldn't find it such fun," said the Captain.

"Oh, milliners make lots of money," returned Helen. "They must. Why, when this bonnet is done, you couldn't get it for ten dollars. Well, the materials don't cost three."

"I wish my girls had your head for business," said the Captain honestly. Helen made him a burlesque obeisance. "Yes, I mean it," he insisted. "You know that I always admired your good sense. I 'm always talking it into Marian."

"Better not," said Helen, with a pin between her teeth.

"Why?"

"Because I haven't got it, and it 'd make her hate me if I had."

"Do you mean to tell me that you 're not a sensible girl?" inquired the Captain.

Helen nodded, and made "Yes" with her lips, as well as she could with the pin between her teeth. She took it out to say, "You should have seen my performances in my room a little while ago." She was thinking of that rehearsal before the mirror.

"What were they?" asked the Captain.

"Oh, as if I should tell!" Helen bowed herself over the bonnet, and blushed, and laughed. Her

father liked to hear the banter between her and his old friend. They both treated her as if she were a child, and she knew it and liked it; she behaved like a child.

"Harkness," said the Captain, turning his fat head half round toward his friend, who sat a little back of him, and breaking off his cigar-ash into the bronze plate at his elbow, "do you know that your remaining in the trade after all the rest of us have gone out of it is something quite monumental?" Captain Butler had a tender and almost reverential love for Joshua Harkness, but he could not help using a little patronage toward him, since his health had grown delicate, and his fortunes had not distinctly prospered.

"I am glad you like it, Jack," said Harkness quietly.

"The Captain is a mass of compliments to-night," remarked Helen.

The Captain grinned his consciousness. "You are a minx," he said admiringly to Helen. Then he threw back his head and pulled at his cigar, uttering between puffs, "No, but I mean it, Harkness. There's something uncommonly fine about it. A man gets to be *noblesse* by sticking to any old order of things. It makes one think of the *ancien régime* somehow to look at you. Why, you're still of the oldest tradition of commerce, the stately and gorgeous traffic of the orient; you're what Samarcand, and Venice, and Genoa, and Lisbon, and London, and Salem have come to."

"They've come to very little in the end then," said Harkness as before.

"Oh, I don't know about that;" the Captain took the end of his cigar out and lit a fresh one from it before he laid it down upon the ash-holder; "I don't know about that. We don't consider material things merely. There has always been something romantic, something heroic about the old trade. To be sure, now that it's got down to telegraphing, it's only fit for New-Yorkers. They're quite welcome to it." This was not very logical taken as a whole, but we cannot always be talking reason. At the words romantic and heroic Helen had pricked her ears, if that phrase may be used concerning ears of such loveliness as hers, and she paused from her millinery. "Ah ha, young lady!" cried the Captain; "you're listening, are you? You didn't know there was any romance or heroism in business, did you?"

"What business?" asked Helen.

"Your father's business, young woman; my old business, the India trade."

"The India trade? Why, were *you* ever in the India trade, Captain Butler?"

"Was *I* ever in the India trade?" demanded the Captain, taking his cigar out of his mouth in order to frown with more effect upon Helen. "Well, upon my word! Where did you think I got my title? I'm too old to have been in the war."

"I didn't know," said Helen.

"I got it in the India trade. I was captain and supercargo many an eleven months' voyage, just as your father was."

Helen was vastly amused at this. "Why, papa! were *you* ever captain of a ship?"

"For a time," said Mr. Harkness, smiling at the absurdity.

"Of course he was!" shouted the Captain.

"Then why isn't he captain, now?"

"Because there's a sort of captain that loses his handle when he comes ashore, and there's a sort that keeps it. I'm one sort and your father's the other. It's natural to call a person of my model and complexion by some kind of title, and it isn't natural to call such a man as your father so. Besides, I was captain longer than he was. I was in the India trade, young lady, and out of it before you were born."

"I was born a great while ago," observed Helen, warningly.

"I daresay you think so," said the Captain. "I thought *I* was, at your age. But you'll find, as you grow older, that you weren't born such a very great while ago after all. The time shortens up. Isn't that so, Harkness?"

"Yes," said Mr. Harkness. "Everything happened day before yesterday."

"Exactly," said the Captain. Helen thought how young she must be to have already got that letter of Robert's so many centuries ago. "Yes," the Captain pursued. "I had been in the India trade twenty-five years when I went out of it in 1857—or it went out of me." He nodded his great, close-clipped head in answer to her asking glance. "It went out of a good many people at that time. We had a

grand smash. We had overdone it. We had warnings enough, but we couldn't realise that our world was coming to an end. It hadn't got so low as telegraphing, yet; but it was mere shop then even, compared with the picturesque traffic of our young days. Eh, Harkness?"

"Yes, it had lost all attraction but profit."

"Were you ever down at India Wharf, Helen?" demanded the Captain. "I don't blame you; neither were my girls. But were you?"

"Of course," said Helen, scorning to lift her eyes from her work. "The Nahant boat starts from it."

"The Nahant boat!" repeated the Captain in a great rage. "In my day there was no Nahant boat about India Wharf, I can tell you, nor any other steamboat; nor any dirty shanties ashore. The place was sacred to the shipping of the grandest commerce in the world. There they lay, those beautiful ships, clean as silver, every one of them, and manned by honest Yankee crews." The Captain got upon his feet for the greater convenience of his eloquence. "Not by ruffians from every quarter of the globe. There were gentlemen's sons before the mast, with their share in the venture, going out for the excitement of the thing; boys from Harvard, fellows of education and spirit; and the forecastle was filled with good Toms and Jims and Joes from the Cape; chaps whose aunts you knew; good stock through and through, sound to the core. The supercargo was often his own captain, and he was often a Harvard man—you know what *they* are!"

"Nicest fellows in the world," consented Helen.

The Captain blew a shaft of white smoke into the air, and then cut it through with a stroke of his cigar. "We had on a mixed cargo, and we might be going to trade at eastern ports on the way out. Nobody knew what market we should find in Calcutta. It was pure adventure, and a calculation of chances, and it was a great school of character. It was a trade that made men as well as fortunes; it took thought and forethought. The owners planned their ventures like generals planning a campaign. They were not going to see us again for a year; they were not going to hear of us till we were signalled outside on our return. When we sailed it was an event, a ceremony, a solemnity; and we celebrated it with song from all the tarry throats on board. Yes, the men used to sing as we dropped down the bay."

"Oh, Captain Butler, it *was* fine!" cried Helen, dropping her hands on her work, and looking up at the Captain in his smoke-cloud, with rapture. "Papa, why didn't you ever let me come down to see your ships sail?"

"It was all changed before you were born, Helen," began her father.

"O yes, all changed," cried the Captain, taking the word away from him. "The ships had begun, long before that, to stop at East Boston, and we sold their cargoes by sample, instead of handling them in our warehouses, and getting to feel some sort of human interest in them. When it came to that, a

mere shopman's speculation, I didn't much care for the New-Yorkers getting it." The Captain sat down and smoked in silence.

"How did the New-Yorkers get it?" asked Helen, with some indignant stir in her local pride.

"In the natural course of things," said her father. "Just as we got it from Salem. By being bigger and richer."

"Oh, it was all changed anyway," broke in the Captain. "We used to import nearly all the cotton goods used in this country,—fabrics that the natives wove on their little looms at home, and that had the sentiment you girls pretend to find in hand-made things,—but before we stopped we got to sending our own cottons to India. And then came the telegraph, and put the finishing-stroke to romance in the trade. Your father loads now according to the latest despatches from Calcutta. He knows just what his cargo will be worth when it gets there, and he telegraphs his people what to send back." The Captain ended in a very minor key: "I 'm glad I went out of it when I did. You 'd have done well to go out too, Harkness."

"I don't know, Jack. I had nothing else in view. You know I had become involved before the crash came; and I couldn't get out."

"I think you could," returned the Captain stubbornly, and he went on to show his old friend how; and the talk wandered back to the great days of the old trade, and to the merchants, the supercargoes, the captains, the mates of their youth. They talked

of the historic names before their date, of Cleaveland and his voyages, of Handasyde Perkins, of Bromfield, of the great chiefs of a commerce which founded the city's prosperity, and which embraced all climes and regions. The Dutch colonies and coffee, the China trade and tea, the North-west coast and furs; the Cape, and its wines and oil; the pirates that used to harass the early adventurers; famous shipwrecks; great gains and magnificent losses; the splendour of the English nabobs and American residents at Calcutta; mutinies aboardship; the idiosyncrasies of certain sailors; the professional merits of certain black cooks: these varied topics and interests conspired to lend a glamour to the India trade as it had been, that at last moved Captain Butler to argument in proof of the feasibility of its revival. It was the explanation of this scheme that wearied Helen. At the same time she saw that Captain Butler did not mean to go very soon, for he had already sunk the old comrade in the theorist so far as to be saying, "Well, sir," and "Why, sir," and "I tell you, sir." She got up—not without dropping her scissors from her lap, as is the custom of her sex—and gave him her hand, which he took in his left, without rising.

"Going to bed? That's right. I shall stay a bit, yet. I want to talk with your father."

"Talk him into taking a little rest," said Helen, looking at the Captain as she bent over her father to kiss him good-night.

"I shall give him all sorts of good advice," returned the Captain cheerily.

Her father held her hand fondly till she drew an arm's-length away, and then relinquished it with a very tender "Good-night, my dear."

Helen did not mean to go to bed, and when she reached her own room, she sat a long time there, working at Margaret's bonnet, and overhearing now and then some such words of the Captain's as "dyes," "muslins," "ice," "teak," "gunny-bags," "shellac," "Company's choppers,"—a name of fearful note descriptive of a kind of Calcutta handkerchief once much imported. She imagined that the Captain was still talking of the India trade. Her father spoke so low that she could not make out any words of his; the sound of his voice somehow deeply touched her, his affection appealed to hers in that unintelligible murmur, as the disembodied religion of a far-heard hymn appeals to the solemnity of the listener's soul. She began to make a fantastic comparison of the qualities of her father's voice and the Captain's, to the disadvantage of the Captain's other qualities; she found that her father was of finer spirit and of gentler nature, and by a natural transition she perceived that it was a grander thing to be sitting alone in one's room with one's heart-ache than to be perhaps foolishly walking the piazza with one's accepted commonplace destiny as Marian Butler was at that moment. At this point she laughed at herself, said "Poor Marian" aloud, and recognised that her vagaries were making Captain Butler an ill return for his kindness in dropping in to chat with her father; she hoped he would not chat too long, and tire him out; and so her

thoughts ran upon Robert again, and she heard no more of the talk below, till after what seemed to her, starting from it, a prolonged reverie. Then she was aware of Captain Butler's boots chirping out of the library into the hall, toward the door, with several pauses, and she caught fragments of talk again: "I had no idea it was as bad as that, Harkness—bad business, must see what can be done, weather it a few weeks longer—confoundedly straitened myself—pull you through," and faintly, "Well, good-night, Joshua; I'll see you in the morning." There was another pause, in which she fancied Captain Butler lighting his cigar at the chimney of the study-lamp with which her father would be following him to the door; the door closed and her father went slowly back to the library, where she felt rather than heard him walking up and down. She wanted to go to him, but she would not; she wanted to call to him, but she remained silent; when at last she heard his step upon the stairs, heavily ascending, and saw the play of his lamp-light on the walls without, she stealthily turned down the gas that he might not think her awake. Half an hour later, she crept to his door, which stood a little ajar, and whispered, "Papa!"

"What is it, Helen?" He was in bed, but his voice sounded very wakeful. "What is it, my dear!"

"Oh, I don't know!"—she flung herself on her knees beside his bed in the dark, and put her arms about his neck—"but I feel so unhappy!"

"About—" began her father, but she quickly interrupted.

"No, no! About *you*, papa! You seem so sad and careworn, and I'm nothing but a burden and a trouble to you."

"You are nothing but a comfort and a help to me. Poor child! You mustn't be worried by my looks. I shall be all right in the morning. Come, come!"

"But weren't you perplexed somehow about business? Weren't you thinking about those accounts?"

"No, my dear."

"What were you thinking of?"

"Well, Helen, I was thinking of your mother and your little brothers."

"Oh!" said Helen, with the kind of recoil which the young must feel even from the dearest dead. "Do you often think of them?"

"No, I believe, not often. Never so much as to-night, since I first lost them; the house seemed full of them then. I suppose these impressions must recur."

"Oh, doesn't it make you feel strange?" asked Helen, cowering a little closer to him.

"Why should it? It doesn't make me feel strange to have your face against mine."

"No, but— O don't, don't talk of such things, or I can't endure it! Papa, papa! I love you so, it breaks my heart to have you talk in that way. How wicked I must be not to like you to think of them! But don't, to-night! I want you to think of me, and what we are going to do together, and

about all our plans for next winter, and for that new house, and everything. Will you? Promise!"

Her father pressed her cheek closer against his, and she felt the fond smile which she could not see in the dark. He gave her his promise, and then began to talk about her going down to the Butlers', which it seemed the Captain had urged further after she had bidden him good-night. The Captain was going to stay in Boston a day or two, and Mr. Harkness thought he might run down with him at the end of the week. Helen did not care to go, but with this in view she did not care to say so. She let her father comfort her with caressing words and touches, as when she was a child, and she frankly stayed her weak-heartedness upon his love. She was ashamed, but she could not help it, nor wish to help it. As she rested her head upon his pillow she heard his watch ticking under it; in this sound all the years since she was a little girl were lost. Then his voice began to sink drowsily, as it used to do in remote times, when she had wearied him out with her troubles. He answered at random, and his talk wandered so that it made her laugh. That roused him to full consciousness of her parting kiss. "Good-night," he said, and held her hand, and drew her down by it again, and kissed her once more.

III.

Helen woke the next morning with the overnight ache still at her heart: she wondered that she could have thought of leaving her father; but when she opened her shutters and let in the light, she was aware of a change that she could not help sharing. It was the wind that had changed, and was now east; the air was fresh and sparkling; the homicidal sunshine of the day before lay in the streets and on the house fronts as harmless as painted sunshine in a picture. Another day might transform all again; the tidal wave of life that the sea had sent from its deep cisterns out over the land might ebb as quickly, and the world find itself old and haggard, and suffering once more; but while it lasted, this respite was a rapture.

Helen came down with something of it in her face, the natural unreasoned and unreasoning hopefulness of young nerves rejoicing in the weather's mood; but she began at breakfast by asking her father if he did not think it was rather crazy for her to be starting off for Beverley the very day after she had got home for good, and had just unpacked everything. She said she would go only on three

conditions:—first, that he felt perfectly well; second, that he would be sure to come down on Saturday; and third, that he would be sure to bring her back with him on Monday.

"I don't think I could stand Marian Butler in her present semi-fluid state *more* than three days; and I wouldn't consent to leave you, papa, except that while you 're worrying over business you 'd really rather not have me about. Would you?"

Her father said he always liked to have her about.

"O yes; of course," said Helen. "But don't you see, I 'm trying to make it a virtue to go, and I can't go unless I do?"

He laughed with her at her hypocrisy. They agreed that this was Thursday the 15th, and that he should come down on Saturday the 17th, and that he would let nothing detain him, and that he would come in time for dinner, and not put it off, as he would be sure to do, till the last train. Helen gave him a number of charges as to his health, and his hours of work, and bade him, if he did not feel perfectly well, to telegraph her instantly. When he started down town she made him promise to drive home. After the door closed upon him, she wondered that she had ever allowed herself to think of leaving him, and indignantly dismissed the idea of going to Beverley; but she went on and packed her trunk so as to have it ready when the express-man came for it. She could easily send him away, and besides, if she did not go now, there was no hope of getting her father off for a holiday and a little change

of scene. She quitted the house in time to catch the noon train, and rode drearily down to Beverley, but not without the comfort of feeling herself the victim of an inexorable destiny. All the way down she was in impulse rushing back to Boston, and astonishing Margaret by her return, and telling her father that she found she could not go, and being fondly laughed at by him. She was almost in tears when the brakeman shouted out the name of the station, and if Marian Butler had not been there with her phaeton, in obedience to the Captain's telegram announcing Helen's arrival, she would have hidden herself somewhere, and taken the next train back to town. As it was, she descended into the embrace of her friend, who was so glad to see her that she tried to drive through the train, just beginning to move off, on the track that crossed their road, and had to be stopped by the baggage-master, who held the pony's nose till the train was well on its way to Portland. At the door of the cottage, when the pony had drawn up the phaeton there, with a well-affected air of being driven up, Mrs. Butler met Helen with tender and approving welcome, and said that they could never have hoped to get her father to come unless she had come first. "This change in the weather will be everything for him, and you mustn't worry about him," she said, laying a soothing touch upon Helen's lingering anxieties. "If he has any business perplexities, you may be sure he 'd rather have you out of the way. I have seen something of business perplexities in my time, my dear,

and I know what they are. I shall telegraph to Mr. Butler to bring your father in the same train with him, and not give him any chance of slipping through his fingers."

Mrs. Butler was one of those pale, slight ladies, not easily imaginable apart from the kind of soft breakfast shawl which she wore, and which harmonised with the invalid purple under her kind eyes, the homes of habitual headache; and the daughters of the marriage Captain Butler had made rather late in life with a woman fifteen years younger than himself, were as unlike their mother as their father was. These large, warm blondes invited all the coolness they could with their draperies, and stood grouped about her, so many statues of health and young good looks and perpetual good-nature, with bangs and frizzes over their white foreheads, and shadowing their floating, heavily-lashed blue eyes. When alone they often tended in behaviour to an innocent rowdiness; they were so amiable, and so glad, and so strong, that they could not very well keep quiet, and when quiet, especially in their mother's presence, they had a knowingly quelled look: in their father's presence they were not expected nor liked to be quiet. They admired Helen almost as much as they admired their mother. She was older than any of them, except Marian, and was believed to be a pattern of style and wisdom, who had had lots of offers, and could marry *any*body. While Helen and their mother talked together, they listened in silence, granting their superiority, with

the eager humility of well-bred younger girlhood; and Marian went to see about lunch.

Mr. Ray was coming to lunch, and Helen was to see him with Marian for the first time since their engagement. He was a man she had not known very well in Harvard, though he was of the class she had danced through with. He was rather quiet, and she had not formed a flattering opinion of him; some of the most brilliant fellows liked him, but she had chosen to think him dull. That was some years ago, and she had not often met him since; he had been away a great deal.

His quiet seemed to have grown upon him, when he appeared, or it might have been the contrast of his composure with the tumult of the young girls that gave it such a positive effect. He seemed the best of friends with them all, but in his own way. He spoke little and he spoke low; and he could not be got to repeat what he said; he always said something different the second time, and if he only looked as if he were going to speak, his prospective sisters-in-law fell helplessly silent. He was not quite so tall as Marian, and he was much slighter; she generously prided herself upon being unable to wear his gloves, which Jessie Butler could just get on. He was a very scrupulously perfect man as to his gloves, and every part of his dress, which the young ladies now criticised in detail, after he had paid his duty to Helen and their mother. They all used him with a freedom that amused Helen, and that was not much short of the frankness with which Marian came out

and planted a large kiss upon his lips, and then, without speaking to him, turned to her mother with an air of housekeeperly pre-occupation to ask something about the lunch, and disappeared again.

Mr. Ray took everything with grave composure, a little point of light in either of his brown eyes, and the slightest curve of the small brown moustache that curled tightly in over his upper lip, showing his sense from time to time of what he must have found droll if some one else had been in his place. He had an affectionate deference for Mrs. Butler that charmed Helen. He carved at lunch with a mastery of the difficult art, and he was quite at ease in his character of head of the family. It gave Helen a sort of shock to detect him in pressing Marian's hand under the table; but upon reflection, she was not sure that she disapproved of it.

She perceived that she must revise her opinion of Mr. Ray. Without being witty, his talk was bright and to the last degree sensible, with an edge of satire for the young girls, to whom at the same time he was alertly attentive. Helen thought his manner exquisite, especially towards herself in her quality of Marian's old and valued friend; it was just what the manner of a man in his place should be. He talked a good deal to her, and told her he had spent most of the summer on the water, "Which accounts," she mused, "for his brown little hands, not much bigger than a Jap law-student's, and for that perfect mass of freckles." He said he was expecting his boat round from Manchester; and he hoped that she would come

with the other young ladies and take a look at her after lunch. He said "boat" so low that Helen could just catch the word, and she smiled in consenting to go and look at it, for she imagined from his deprecatory tone that it was something like a dory which might have been bestowed upon Mr. Ray's humility by some kindly fisherman. Walking to the shore by Helen's side he said something further about running down to Mt. Dessert in his boat, and about one of his men knowing how to broil a mackerel pretty well, which puzzled her, and shook her in her error, just before they came upon a vision of snowy duck and paint, and shining brasses, straight and slim and exquisite as Helen herself in line, and light as a bird dipped for a moment upon the water. A small boat put out for them, and they were received on board the yacht with grave welcome by Mr. Ray, whose simple dress—so far hitherto from proclaiming itself nautical in cut or colour—now appeared perfectly adapted to yachting. He did not seem to do the host here any more than at Captain Butler's table, but he distinguished Helen as his chief guest, with a subtle accent in his politeness that gave her quick nerves something of the pleasure of a fine touch in music. She was now aware that she admired Mr. Ray, and she wondered if he did not look shorter than he really was.

She found it quite in character that he should have a friend on board, whom he had not mentioned to any of them, and whom he now introduced in his most suppressed tones. The friend was a tall young Englishman, in blue Scotch stuff; and Helen decided

at once that his shoulders sloped too much; he talked very far down in his throat, and he had a nervous laugh; Helen discovered that he had also a shy, askance effect of having just looked at you.

Ray asked the ladies if they would fish, and when they would not, he frankly tried to entertain them in other ways. It came out that he could both play and sing; and he picked on a banjo the air of a Canadian boat-song he had learned at Gaspé the summer before. That made the girls ask him to show his sketches of the *habitans*, and Helen thought them very good, and very droll, done with vigour and *chic*. He made the afternoon pass charmingly, but what amused Helen most was Marian's having already got his tone about his possessions and accomplishments; her instinct would not suffer her to afflict him by any show of pride in them, proud as she was of them; and on the yacht there was no approach to endearments between them. "Really," thought Helen, "Marian will be equal to it, after all," and began to respect her sex. After supper, which Ray offered them on board, and which that one of the men who could broil a mackerel pretty well served with touches of exquisite marine cookery, Helen felt that it would be mean to refrain any longer. "Marian," she whispered to her friend apart, "he is *perfect!*" and Marian looked gratefully at her and breathed "Yes!"

Helen was generous, but the proximity of this prosperous love made her feel very desolate and left behind. The aching tenderness for Robert,

which was at the bottom of all her moods, throbbed sorer; she must still it somehow, and she began to talk with the Englishman. As she went on she could not help seeing that the young Butler girls, innocently wondering at her under their bangs, were suffering some loss of an ideal, and that Marian's averted eyes were reflecting Mr. Ray's disapproval, otherwise hidden deeper than the sea over which they sailed.

The Englishman, after a moment of awkward hesitation and apparent self-question, seemed to fall an easy prey. He presently hung about her quite helplessly; but his helplessness did not make her pity him. "So nice," he said, as they sat a little apart, after Ray had attempted a diversion with another Canadian barcarole, "to be able to do something of that kind. But it isn't very common in the States, is it, Miss—Harkness?"

"I don't understand. Do you mean that we don't commonly know Canadian boat-songs? I don't suppose we do."

"No, no; I don't mean *that!*" replied Mr. Rainford; if that was the name which Helen had caught. "I meant being able to do something, you know, to keep the ball rolling, as you say."

"Do we say 'keep the ball rolling'?" Helen affected to muse.

"I heard it was an Americanism," said Mr. Rainford, laughing at the pretence she made, with her downward look, of giving his words anxious thought. "I was thinking of the Canadians when I spoke.

They seem to be up to all sorts of things. I was at a place last month—Old Beach or Old Orchard—something like that—where the Montreal people come; and some of those fellows knew no end of things. Songs, like Mr. Ray's; and tricks; and—and—well, I don't know."

Helen shook her head. "No, we don't have those accomplishments in the States, as you say. We 're a serious people."

"I don't know," laughed Mr. Rainford. "You have your own fun, I suppose."

"In our poor way, yes. We go to lectures, and attend the public school exhibitions, and—yes, we have our amusements."

Mr. Rainford seemed carried quite beyond himself by these ironical impertinences. "Really, I can't admit that they 're all of that kind. I saw a good deal of an amusement at the sea-side that I was told was not very serious."

"Indeed! What could it have been?" asked Helen, with the affectation of deep interest.

"Oh, surely now, Miss Harkness, you don't expect me to explain it. All the young people seemed to understand it; the Canadian ladies said it was an American institution." She did not help him on, and he had to get out of the affair as he could. He reddened with the effort. "I must say it seemed very pleasant, at least for the two people concerned."

"Oh, only two!" cried Helen.

The poor young man laughed gratefully, and took up the burden of silliness which she now left wholly

to him. "Yes; a young lady—always very charming—and—"

"A gentleman always very brilliant and interesting. Oh, yes!" She turned about on her camp-stool with an unconscious air, and began to talk to the young Butler girls. She had provoked his recognition of the situation, if he had meant his allusion to sea-side flirtations for that, but her fretted nerves did not resent it the less because she was in the wrong. She could have said that there was nothing in her words, and afterwards she did say so to herself; but, as if he found a personal edge in them, Mr. Rainford sat quite blank for a moment; then after some attempts at self-recovery in talk with the others, he rose and went below.

"Ned," said Marian, "where *did* you pick up that particularly odious Englishman?" In her vexation with Helen, it was necessary to assail *some* one.

"He 's a very good fellow," said Ray quietly. "I met him in Cairo, first. He 's very clever; and remarkably well up in Coptic—for a lord."

All the Butlers started, as if to pounce upon Ray. "A *lord!*" they hoarsely breathed, with the bitter sense of loss natural to girls who might never see a nobleman again.

"*Why* did you introduce him as Mister?" demanded Marian, in accents expressive of the common anguish; and somehow the revelation of her victim's quality seemed to Helen to heighten the folly and cruelty of her behaviour; it seemed to elevate it into a question of international interest.

"I *said* Lord Rainford," retorted Ray.

"You *whispered* it!" cried Marian bitterly.

"Well, he won't mind your calling him Mr. Rainford. I can explain," said Ray. "Don't change, now," he added mischievously.

"As if we should!" indignantly retorted Marian. "And let him know that we'd been talking about him! No, he shall remain Mister to the end of the chapter with *us*. Are you going to bring him to the house?"

"I'm going to Salem with him as soon as I put you ashore. I'd have asked you to let me bring him to lunch if I'd supposed he was on the boat. When I left him at Manchester this morning, he talked of going to Boston by the cars."

"I think he's hideous," said Marian, for all comment on the explanation.

"Not pretty, but precious," returned Ray tranquilly. "He's a good fellow, but he knows he isn't good-looking. He's rather sensitive about it, and it makes him nervous and awkward with ladies; but he's a very sensible fellow among men," Ray concluded.

There was a little unpleasant pause, and then Ray and Marian began talking eagerly to Helen, as if they felt a little ashamed, and a good deal sorry for her, and were anxious to get her to do or say something that would bring back their good opinion of her.

They dropped anchor in a sheet of sunset red off Captain Butler's place, and Ray pulled them ashore in his small boat. Some of them tried to sing the

barcarole he had played, but the girlish voices thrilled sadly over the glassy tide, which was softly ebbing, and leaving more and more bare the drowned-looking boulders, heavily tressed with the dripping golden brown seaweed.

Marian sat in the bow of the boat, and as she rose and stood there, holding out one hand to Ray to be helped ashore, and gathering her skirts with the other, she glanced towards the house: "Why, who is there with mamma on the verandah? Why, it can't be papa!"

Helen looked round over her shoulder where she sat, and now they all looked, Ray turning his head and mechanically clasping Marian's hand.

Captain Butler was walking up and down before his wife, who sat listening to what he was saying. He was talking very loud and very fast, with a sort of passionate vehemence; his tones reached them, but they could not make out his words. He gesticulated as if describing some scene, and then suddenly stopped, and threw back his head, and seemed to be laughing.

"What can amuse Captain Butler so much?" asked Helen, with a smile. At the same time she saw him draw out his handkerchief and hide his face in it, and sit down with his face still hidden. The pantomime which they could see with such distinctness, and of which they yet remained so ignorant, somehow began to overawe them. Ray quickly helped them from the boat. "I am going up with you," he said, and with a glance at Marian, "Miss Harkness,"

he added, "won't you take my arm over these rocks?"

Helen clung heavily to him as she tottered up the path. "I wonder what has brought Captain Butler to-night," she said tremulously. "He wasn't to be here till Saturday."

"I fancy he's persuaded your father to come with him," answered Ray. "Look out for that stone, Miss Harkness."

"Oh, I hope papa isn't worse again," said Helen, stumbling over it. She hurt herself, and was glad of the pain that let her give their way to the tears that came into her eyes.

"No; I should think he was more likely to be better," said Ray, refusing to see her trouble, and really lifting her along. The others had fallen behind a little, and these two had now reached the gravel drive up to the piazza steps alone.

They saw a quick parley between the Captain and Mrs. Butler, and he stepped in-doors through one of the long windows, while she came forward to the rail, and called out to Marian, "Your father wants all of you to go to the other door, Marian."

"Why, mamma—" began Marian.

"Go, go!" cried her mother. "Don't ask!—Edward, bring Helen here!"

"Yes, it's some little surprise," said Ray, beginning to laugh. "Do you like surprises, Miss Harkness?"

"I don't believe I do," she answered, trying to laugh too.

Mrs. Butler came forward and took her from Ray, motioning or rather looking him aside, as she clasped the girl tight in her arms. At this moment she saw Captain Butler glance stealthily at them from within the room; his face was contorted and wet with tears. "What—what is it, Mrs. Butler?" she gasped, weakly pulling back a little from her close embrace, and facing her.

There was an instant in which the elder woman dwelt upon her with all of compassion and imploring in her eyes. Then she said, "Death, Helen. Your father is dead!"

Helen's strength came back. As if many days had passed since she saw him, "To-day?" she asked, still holding her hand against Mrs. Butler's breast, where she had pressed it.

"At two o'clock."

Helen softly loosed herself from Mrs. Butler's arms, and sat down in the chair near which they stood, and looked out upon the grounds sloping to the water, the black rocks by the shore; the huger rocks that showed their backs like sleeping sea-beasts out of the smooth water; the yacht darkening against the east; far beyond the rim of the sea, a light just twinkling up in the invisible tower at the horizon's verge. A thick darkness seemed to come down out of the sky over all, but Helen would not let it close upon her. She fought the swoon away, and looked up at the pitying, suffering face above her.

"I am glad you told me at once, Mrs. Butler.

Thank you," she said, and sank back in her chair, while the other fell on her knees beside her, and gathered her to her heart again, and wept over her.

"O my poor, poor child! It's the one certain thing in all the world. It *will* be known, and it *will* be seen. What wouldn't I have given to keep it from you for ever, Helen? You and my Marian were babies together. I used to know your mother. You are like a daughter to me." Helen passively submitted to the caresses, to the kisses, dropped with tears upon her pale cheeks, but she did not say anything, or try to reply. "But it was not to be kept," Mrs. Butler went on. "It could not be hidden, and it seemed the mercifullest and best way not to try to keep it from you in foolish self-pity for a moment, more or less."

"O yes, yes," said Helen, like another person hearing of her own case. "It was best," and she found herself toying with the strings of her hat, curling them round her finger, and running them out in a long roll.

"It doesn't kill, my dear. It brings its own cure with it. It's sorrow, but it isn't trouble! It passes over us like a black wave, but it doesn't destroy us. You don't realise it yet, Helen, my poor girl, but even when you do, you will bear it. Put your head down on my shoulder, dear, and I will tell you. It was in his office, where he had spent so many years at the work which had given him his honoured name and place in the world. My husband was there with him. They were turning over some books

together. He saw your father put his hand over his heart, and then your father sank down in his arm-chair, and gave a little sigh, and—that was all."

Mrs. Butler broke into a fresh sobbing on the girl's neck, but Helen remained silent and still, letting herself be clutched tight to that loving breast. "There was no pain, Helen, there was no suffering. It was a falling into rest. But before he rested—before he drew that last little sigh, my dear—he spoke one word. Do you know what it was, Helen?" She felt the girl tremble, and, as it were, lapse in her arms. "It was just your name: it was, 'Helen.' You were the last thing in his thoughts upon earth—the first in heaven."

Helen broke into a long, low wail. She rose from where she sat, and flung off the kind clinging arms, as if their pity stifled her, and fled up and down the verandah, a storm of grief that beat forth in thick sobs, and escaped in desolate moans.

Mrs. Butler did not try to stay her, or even to approach her, as she wavered to and fro, and wrung her hands, or pressed them to her streaming eyes. At last, after many moments, as long as hours of common life, Helen suddenly checked herself, and dried the tears that drenched her face. There had come the lull which must succeed such a passion. She stopped before Mrs. Butler, and asked in a husky, changed voice, "Isn't there any train up to-night?"

"Why, Helen—"

"Because if there is, I must take it. I know what

you will say, but don't say it. If you try to stop me, I will *walk*. I am going *home*."

It was too soon yet for her to realise that she should never go home again, but the word went to the mother-heart that ached for her with the full measure of its tragic irony, and she perceived with a helpless throe of compassion how alone in the world this fair young stricken creature stood.

Ray had sent word to his English friend that he should not join him again on board the yacht that night, briefly explaining the trouble that kept him, and promising to see him again on the morrow. He directed the yacht to put in to Salem, as had been arranged, and instructed his men to tell Lord Rainford about the trains for Boston. He was with Captain Butler and the awe-stricken girls in the parlour, while Mrs. Butler kept Helen on the verandah, and he had gathered from the captain such part of the story as he had not already divined.

"Edward!" called Mrs. Butler from without, and he went to her where she stood with Helen, now perfectly silent and tearless. "Miss Harkness wishes to go home to-night. I shall go with her. Mr. Butler has just got home, and—" She hesitated to say before Helen's affliction that he had had too hard a day already, and she could not let him incur the further excitement and fatigue; but Ray seemed to know.

"Captain Butler had better stay here," he said promptly, "and let me go. We haven't time for the seven o'clock at Beverley," he added, glancing at his

watch, "but we can catch the eight o'clock express at Salem if we start at once."

"I am ready," said Helen quietly. "My trunk can come to-morrow. I haven't even unlocked it."

Ray had turned away to ring the stable bell. "Jerry, put my mare into the two-seated phaeton. Don't lose any time," he called out, stopping Jerry's advance up the walk for orders, and the phaeton was at the steps a minute or two after Mrs. Butler appeared in readiness to go.

Helen went into the lighted dining-room, where Captain Butler and the girls had fearfully grouped themselves, waiting what motion of farewell she should make. Her face was pale, and somewhat stern. She went round and kissed them, beginning and ending with Marian, and she did not give way, though they each broke out crying at her touch, or at her turning from them. When she came to the Captain she put out her arms, and took him into them, and pressed herself to his breast in a succession of quick embraces, while he hid his face, and could not look at her.

"Good-bye all," she said, in a firm tone, and went out and got into the phaeton, where Mrs. Butler was sitting. Ray sprang to the place beside the driver. "Salem, Jerry. Quick!" and they flew forward through the evening air, cold and damp in currents, and warm in long stretches over the smooth road. She smelt the heavy scent of the spiræa in the swampy places, and of the milkweed in the sand. She said no, she was not chilly, to Mrs. Butler;

and from time to time they talked together: about the days beginning to get a little shorter now, and its not being so late as it seemed. Once Ray struck a match and looked at his watch, and the driver looked at Ray, who said, "All right," and did not say anything else during the drive. Again, after silence, Helen spoke—

"You know I wouldn't let you come with me, if I could help it, Mrs. Butler."

"You couldn't help it, dear," answered the other. "Don't talk of it."

The station was a blur and dance of lights; she was pushed into the train as it moved away. She sat next the window in the seat with Mrs. Butler, and Ray in the seat before them. He did not look round, nor did Mrs. Butler sit very close, or take her hand, or try in any futile way to offer her comfort. The train seemed to go forward into the night by long leaps. Once it stopped somewhere on the track remote from a station, and Ray went out with some other passengers to see what had happened. Helen was aware of a wild joy in the delay, and of a wish that it might last for ever. She did not care to know what had caused it. As the cars drew into the Boston depot, she found her handkerchief, soaked with tears, in her hand, and she pulled down her veil over her swollen eyes.

At her own door, she said, "Well, Margaret," like a ghostly echo of her wonted greetings, and found Margaret's eyes red and swollen too.

"I knew you would come, Miss Helen," said Mar-

garet. "I told them you never would let the night pass over your head."

"Yes, I would come, of course," answered Helen. She led the way back into the library, where there were lights, and where the study-lamp burnt upon the table at which last night she had sat with her father. Then, while the others stood there, she took up the lamp, and pushed open the drawing-room doors, as she had seen him do, and, as she felt, with something of his movement, and walked forward under the dimly-burning gas to the place where she had known he would be lying. Everything had been done decorously, and he appeared, as they say, very natural. She stood with the lamp lifted high, and looked down at the face, slowly and softly wiping the tears, and shaken now and then with a sob. She did not offer to kiss or touch him. She turned from the clay out of which he had departed, and walked back to the library, where it seemed as if he should meet her, and speak to her of what had happened.

There were Mrs. Butler and Mr. Ray, and behind them there was Margaret. She felt how pitifully she must be looking at them. Some one caught the lamp, which had grown so light, from her hand, and some one had thrown up the window. That was right; she should not faint now; and now she was opening her eyes, and Ray's arm was under her neck, where she lay upon the floor, and Mrs. Butler was dashing her face with cologne.

IV.

In those days Helen came to understand what her father had meant by saying, that after her mother and her little brothers died, the house seemed full of them, and that it did not make him afraid. Now that he had died, the house seemed full of him, and she was not afraid. She grew to be weak and sore, and almost blind from weeping; but even when she cowered over the dead face, and cried and moaned to it, it seemed something earthly and perishable in her love bewailing only the earthly and perished part of him, while what was really himself beheld her grief with a high, serene compassion, and an intelligence with some immortal quiet in her own soul. Whatever it was, whether the assurance of his life after death, or the mere blind effect of custom, prolonging his presence, as the severed nerves refer sensation to the amputated limb, and rehabilitate and create it anew, this sense of his survival and nearness to her was so vivid at times that she felt as if she might, could she but turn quickly enough, see him there before her; that the inward voice must make itself audible—the airy presence tangible. It was strongest with her that first night, but it did not cease for long afterwards.

He was with her as she followed him to the grave; and he came back with her to the house from which they had borne him.

In this sense of his survival, which neither then nor afterwards had any fantastic quality to her, she seemed to draw nearer to him than ever before. He understood now, he knew the depth and truth of her love, through all her vanities and follies. Something inexpressibly sweet and dear was in this consciousness, and remained always, when its vividness had faded with the keen anguish of her grief. Such things, the common experience of all bereavement, are hard to put in words. Said, they seem crude and boastful, and more than what is felt; but what is felt is more than can ever be said.

Captain Butler came up the morning after Helen's return home, and he and Mrs. Butler remained in the house with her till all was over. Marian came up too, and Ray was there with his silent vigilance, from which everything seemed done without his agency. Helen had but to weep, to sorrow up and down the house; they gave her anguish way, and did not mock it with words of comfort. When the tempests of her grief swept over her, they left her to herself; when the calm that follows such paroxysms came, they talked to her of her father, and led her to talk of him. Then she was tranquil enough. At some droll things that forced themselves into remembrance in their talk, she even laughed without feeling it treason to her grief; and it was not what she thought or recalled of him that touched the springs

of her sorrow. It was meeting Margaret, downcast and elusive on the stairs, and saying sadly to her, "Well, Margaret;" or catching sight of Captain Butler sitting opposite her father's vacant chair in the library, his grizzled head sunk on his breast, and looking suddenly aged, and, at the same time, awkward in his bereavement, like a great boy, that moved her with intolerable pathos.

Mrs. Butler went home and had out the headache which she had kept back while she must, by force of will, but every day some of them came up to see Helen, and reminded her without urgence that she was to come to them soon. She said yes, she would come very soon, and so remained without going abroad, or looking into the light of the sun. At night, when she lay down she wept, and in the morning when she woke, but through the day her tears were dried. She brooded upon what her father had said and done in the last hours they had spent together, his longing for change and for a new life that now seemed to have been prophetic of death. His weariness of the house that had been his home took a new meaning; he must long have been more in the other world than in this, and but for his pitying love for her, he must have been glad when his swift summons came. She realised at last that he had been an old man. She had known without realising it that his ways were the ways of one who has outlived himself, and who patiently remains in the presence of things that no longer interest him. She wondered if the tie by which she, who was so

wholly of the earth, had bound her father to it, had not sometimes been a painful one. She remembered all the little unthinking selfishnesses of the past, and worse than these, the consolations which she had tried to offer him. She thought of the gentleness with which he always listened to her and consented, and ended by comforting her; and she bitterly accused herself for not having seen all this long ago. But she had not even seen that he had a mortal disorder about him; she had merely thought him wearied with work, or spent with the heat, in those sinkings which had at first so much alarmed her. The hand carried so often to his heart that she now recognised it as an habitual gesture, had given her no warning, and she blamed herself that it had not. But in truth she was not to blame. The sources of his malady were obscure, and even its nature had been so dimly hinted to him that doubtless her father had justified himself in keeping his fear of it from her. Perhaps he had hoped that yet somehow he could struggle to a better footing in other things, before he need cloud her young life with the shadow that hung upon his own; perhaps the end of many resolutions was that he could not do it. She wondered if he had himself known his danger, and if it was of that which he so often began to speak to her. But all now was dark, and this question and every other searched the darkness in vain.

She seemed to stand somewhere upon a point of time between life and death, from which either world was equally remote. She was quite alien here,

without the will or the fitness to be anywhere else; and she shrank, with a vague resentment, from the world that had taken him from her.

This terrible touchstone of death, while it revealed the unimagined tenderness of many hearts, revealed also to her the fact that no friendliness could supply the love in which there was perfect unity of interest and desire, and perfect rest. Every day, when the Butlers came to her they brought her word from some one, from people who had known her father in business, from others who had casually met him, and who all now spoke their regret for his death. A rare quality of character had given him standing in the world that vastly greater prosperity could not have won him; and men who were of quite another stuff had a regard for him, which perhaps now and then expressed itself in affectionate patronage, but which was yet full of reverence. They found something heroic in the quiet constancy with which he fought his long, losing battle, and now that he was down at last, they had their honest regrets and spoke their honest praises. It made Helen very proud of her father to hear them; she read with a swelling heart the paragraphs about him in the newspapers, and even the formal preambles and resolutions which expressed the loss the commerce of the city had suffered in the death of a merchant of his standing and integrity. These things set Helen's father in a new light to her; but while they made her prouder and fonder of his memory, they brought her a pang that she should have known so little of

what formed his life, and should never have cared to know anything of it apart from herself.

This was not the only phase in which she seemed to have been ignorant of him. She had always believed him good and kind, without thinking of him in that way. But now there came poor people to the door, who sometimes asked to see her, or who sometimes only sent by Margaret, to tell how sorry they felt for her, and to say that her father had at this time or that been a good friend to each of them. They all seemed to be better acquainted with him than she, and their simple stories set him in a light in which she had never seen him before. It touched Helen that they should frankly lament her father's death as another of their deprivations, more than if they had pretended merely to condole with her, and she did not take it ill of them, that they generally concluded their blessings on his memory with some hint that further benefactions would be gratefully received. The men accepted her half-dollars in sign that their audience was ended, and went away directly; the women shed tears over the old clothes she gave them, and stayed to drink tea in the kitchen.

One day after she had already seen three or four of these visitors, the bell rang, and Captain Butler's boots came chirping along the hall, not with their old cheerful hint of a burly roll in the wearer's gait, but subdued and slow as if he approached with unnaturally measured tread. Helen sprang into his arms, and broke out crying on his breast. "Oh

Captain Butler! I felt just now that papa *must* be here. Ever since he died he has been with me somehow. It seems wild to say it; but no words can ever tell how I have felt it; and just before you came in, I *know* that he was going to speak to me."

The Captain held her away at arm's-length, and looked into her face. "Poor child! They've sent me to bring you home with me, and I see that I haven't come a moment too soon. You have been alone in this house quite long enough. My God, if he only *could* speak to us!" The Captain controlled himself as he walked up and down the library, with his face twitching, and his hand knotting itself into a fist at his side, and presently he came and sat down in his accustomed chair near Helen. He waited till she lifted her head and wiped her eyes before he began to speak.

"Helen," said Captain Butler, "I told you that they had sent me for you, and I hope that you will come."

"Yes," answered Helen, "I shall be very glad to go with you; but I think it's hard for Marian, bringing my trouble there, to be a blot on her happiness."

"We won't speak of that, my dear," said the Captain. "If Marian can't find her happiness in something besides gaiety, she'd better not think of getting married."

"I wouldn't come if I thought I could endure it here any longer; I wouldn't come, if I had anywhere else to go," cried Helen.

"We wouldn't let you go anywhere else," returned the Captain. "But we can talk of all that another time. What I have to say to you now is something for you to decide. Do you think you are equal to talking a little business with me?"

"O yes. I should like to."

"Yes, it will take up your mind."

The Captain paused restively, and seemed at a loss how to frame what he had next to say. "Helen," he broke out abruptly, "did you know anything about your father's affairs?"

"Papa's affairs?" asked Helen, with a start.

"Oh, don't be troubled—don't be troubled," the Captain hastened to say. "It's all right; perfectly right; but I want to speak to you about yourself, and—it's all right. Don't you think we'd better have one of these windows open?"

"Are they shut?" asked Helen. "Yes, you can open them, please."

"We shall be cheerfuller with a little light," said the Captain, flinging back the shutters; but they hardly looked so. Helen had dark rings round her eyes, which were swollen with her long weeping; she was very pale, and looked old in that black which, in a house of mourning, seems to grow upon women in a single night. She thought the Captain tremulous and broken; these muscles at the sides of his chin hung down, as if ten years had been added to his age in the last fortnight. They made a feint of finding nothing strange in each other, and the Captain resumed as he sat down again: "I mentioned

your father's affairs because there has to be some settlement of the estate, you know; and there are circumstances that make it desirable to have an early settlement. The business was left in a little confusion; it 's apt to be the case," Captain Butler added quickly.

"Yes," Helen said, "papa sometimes spoke of the perplexity he felt about his accounts."

"Did he?" asked the Captain with some relief. "Then I suppose he gave you some idea of how he stood."

"No; he merely said they worried him."

"Well, well. I don't know that there was any occasion to tell you, any occasion for alarm. There seems to have been no will; but that makes no difference. The law makes a will, and you get what there is—that is, all there is." The Captain had a certain forlorn air of disoccupation, which now struck Helen more than what he was saying.

"Would you like to smoke, Captain Butler?" she asked.

"Why, yes, if you will let me, my dear," he said, with an eager, humble gratitude, putting his hand quickly into his breast-pocket. "I didn't know—"

Helen rose, and placed the little table at his elbow, and set the ash-holder on it, as she had done that last night when he had sat there with her father. They looked at each other without speaking.

The Captain struck his match, and said apologetically between the long whiffs with which he lit his

cigar, "I talk better with it, and I have some things to explain."

He paused, and sinking back into his chair with a sigh of comfort which brought a dim smile into Helen's face, presently resumed: "As there is no will, and no executor, there will have to be an administrator. Whom should you like appointed? I believe the Court appoints any one you wish."

"Oh, *you*, Captain Butler!" replied Helen instantly.

"I expected this," said the Captain, "and I suppose I am as fit as any one. I'm sure that no one could care more for your father's interests and honour, and I know rather more of his affairs than anybody else. You will have to make your wishes known in form; but that's easily managed. In the meantime, you had better be away, don't you think, while we are looking into things? I don't know what there is to do, exactly; but I suppose there 's to be some sort of survey, or appraisal, and—yes, you had better be away, when we are looking into things."

"Do you mean—away from the house?" asked Helen.

"Why, yes," the Captain reluctantly assented. "It's a—form; a necessary form."

"It's quite right," said Helen positively. "And —yes,—I had better be out of the way."

"I'm glad you see it in that light, my dear," returned Captain Butler. "You're a good girl,

Helen, and you make it much easier for me. Pack up everything that belongs to you, and go as if you were going to stay." The Captain made a ghastly show of heartiness, and smoked without looking at Helen. "Run over the house, and put together all the things that you would like to retain, and I 'll see that they come down." Helen was trying to catch his eye, and he was keeping his gaze fixed upon the ceiling.

"I don't think I need do that," said Helen; "I should merely have to bring them back with me."

Captain Butler took his cigar from his mouth in compassion, as he now looked at her puzzled face. "We don't mean you should come back, my dear child. We want you to stay with us."

"Oh, I can't do that," said Helen quickly.

"You can't go on living here alone," retorted the Captain.

"No," Helen ruefully assented, and faced Captain Butler in touching dismay.

"You see," he said, "that you must submit. And, Helen," he said with a show of brisk, business-like cheerfulness "*I* think you had better *sell* this house. If I were you, I should sell it at once. You 'll never get more for it."

"Why, what would become of Margaret?" gasped Helen.

"Well, Mrs. Butler has been talking of that. We want a cook, and we will take Margaret."

Helen simply looked bewildered. The Captain apparently found it better to go on while she was in

this daze than await her emergence from it. "And if I were you, I would sell the furniture and pictures and all the things that you have not some particular association with; everything of that sort I should keep." Helen still made no comment, and the Captain went on. "I know all this is very painful, Helen—"

"It isn't painful," said Helen quietly. "It was papa's wish to sell the house. We were talking of it that night—the night before— He thought of building in the country."

"Well, I'm glad to hear it," said Captain Butler. "Then we can push right ahead and do it."

"It's very sudden, though," faltered Helen. "Poor Margaret! What will she say?"

"We will hear what she will say," cried the Captain, ringing the bell before Helen could stop him. Margaret answered it, drying her hands on her apron, as she came in, and then with a prescience of the coming interview, resting them folded upon that prop with which nature in process of time provides the persons of most cooks. "Margaret," said the Captain, "Miss Helen is going to break up housekeeping. She is coming to us. Mrs. Butler wished me to ask you to come too."

Margaret pursed her mouth, and bent forward so far over the natural provision as to catch sight of the toe of her neatly shod small foot. "Should you like to come?" asked the Captain.

"I'm afraid I should feel the change," said Margaret.

"Of course," retorted the Captain shortly. "There is going to *be* a change, and you would feel it. We understand that. But you know me, and you know Mrs. Butler, and you know whether you would have a good place."

"It would be a good place," said Margaret, still surveying her slipper. "But I think I should feel the change more and more."

"Well," said the Captain impatiently, "do you mean yes, or no?"

"I think I should feel the change," replied Margaret.

The Captain was nonplussed by this dry response to his cordial advance, and he waited a moment before he asked: "Have you any other place in view?"

"I had arranged," said Margaret calmly, "to go to a cousin's of mine that lives in the Port; and then advertise for some small family in Old Cambridge where they only keep one girl."

Helen had felt hurt by Margaret's cold foresight in having already so far counted the chances as to have looked out for herself; but at this expression of Margaret's ruling passion, she could not help smiling.

The Captain gave an angry snort. "Very well, then," he said, "there is nothing to do but to pay you up, and let you go," and he took out his pocket-book. "How much is it?"

"There isn't anything coming to me," Margaret returned with the same tranquillity; "Mr. Harkness paid me up."

"But he didn't pay you up to the present time," said the Captain.

"I should wish to consider Miss Helen my guest for the past two weeks," said Margaret, in the neatness of an evidently thought-out speech.

The Captain gave a laugh; but Helen, who knew all Margaret's springs of action, and her insuperable pride, interposed: "You may, Margaret," she said gently.

"Thank you, Miss Helen," said Margaret, lifting her eyes now for the first to glance at Helen. She turned with a little nod of self-dismissal, and went back to the kitchen, leaving the Captain hot and baffled.

It was some moments before he spoke again. "Well, then," he said; "about selling the house: do you know, Helen, I think it had better be sold at auction? It might be tedious waiting for a private sale, and real estate is such a drug, with the market falling, that you might have to lose more on it after waiting than if you forced it to a sale now. How do you feel about it?"

The finesse that the Captain was using in all the business, wreathing the hard legal exigencies of the case in flowers of suggestion and counsel, and putting on all a smiling air of volition, could never be fully known, except to the goodness that inspired it; but he was rewarded by the promptness with which Helen assented to everything.

"I shall be glad to have you do whatever you think is best, Captain Butler," she answered. "I have no feeling about the house—it's strange that I

shouldn't have—and I don't care how soon it is sold, nor how it is sold."

The Captain instantly advanced a step further. "Perhaps you wouldn't care to come back to it at all, any more? Perhaps you could put your hand on what you 'd like to keep, and I could look after it for you, and—" He stopped at seeing Helen change countenance. "Well?"

"Did you think of selling the furniture too?" she asked.

"Why, yes," assented the Captain. "I said so just now. I 'm afraid you 'd find it a burden after the house was gone. You 'd have to store it, you know. Still, if you don't wish it—"

"Oh, yes," said Helen, drawing a long breath, "it had better go!" She spoke with a gentle submissiveness that smote the Captain to the heart.

"You can keep everything you want, my dear—you can keep it all!" he returned vehemently.

"That would be silly," said Helen. "Besides, there are very few things I should want to keep. I couldn't keep papa's things: they 're terrible. I should like you to take everything that belonged to him, Captain Butler—except his watch and his Bible—and give them to some poor people that could use them. Then I only want my own things; and perhaps his chair, and—" Helen stopped, and the Captain, not to look at her, cast a roving eye about the room.

"Those Copleys, of course, you would reserve," he remarked presently.

"No," said Helen, "I never saw the people. You can sell them. But I shall keep my mother's picture, because I think papa would like me to."

The sense of her father's presence expressed in these words touched the Captain again. He cleared his throat, but he was still hoarse in saying, "I think the Museum would buy the Copleys." Helen seemed too indifferent about their fate to make any reply.

The worst was now over. Captain Butler had accomplished all that he wished without being obliged to explain anything to Helen, or to alarm her fears in any way, and he was unreasonably heartened by the fact. He might, perhaps, have stated the whole truth to her ignorance of affairs without being much more intelligible than he had been with all these skilful evasions. If he had said, "Your father died with his business in the utmost confusion, and probably insolvent," she would scarcely have realised that life was not to go on just as before; and if he had said, "You are left a beggar," how could Helen Harkness have conceived of herself in the figure of one of the women who had dropped their tears into their tea-cups in the kitchen, as they cried over the old clothes she had given them? It had wrung the Captain's heart to hear her talk of poor people, and of giving; and yet, he rose from his chair, when he saw Helen still safe in her ignorance, with something like cheerfulness.

"You just make a memorandum of what you'd like reserved, Helen," he said, "and I'll attend to it for you. Put your own little traps together, and I'll

send a carriage to take you down to the four o'clock train. Anything you think of afterwards of course will be kept for you."

He left her to this task. It was at least something to do, and Helen went about it with an energy which she was surprised to find in herself. At first the reproach with which the silent house seemed to use her indifference smote upon her, but it did not last long. Home had died out of it, as life had gone out of her father's dust; and neither house nor grave was anything to her. She passed from room to room, and opened closets and drawers, and looked at a hundred things. She ended in despair by choosing a very few. If she could not keep all, why should she want any? Whatever it seemed desecration to sell she put on her memorandum to be given away. She selected a large number of things for Margaret, and when she sat down at the old Bostonian half-past two o'clock dinner (to which her father had always kept), she told Margaret what she had done. Margaret took one or two little trinkets which Helen offered her in her hand, and declined the other gifts.

"Why, what do you mean, Margaret?" asked Helen. "Why don't you take them?"

"I shouldn't wish to, Miss Helen," said Margaret, pursing her mouth.

"Well, have your own way," returned Helen. "I suppose this is another of your mysteries."

"I should wish to do everything properly, Miss Helen."

"What do you mean by properly? Why do you

Miss Helen me, all the time? What made you so stiff with Captain Butler? and he so kind!"

"Captain Butler is a very pleasant gentleman," said Margaret, in her neatest manner, "but I shouldn't wish him to think it was quite the same as going on here."

"You're very foolish. It would have been a nice place."

"I wished him to understand that I felt it a change."

"Well, well!" cried Helen impatiently. "You must do as you please, but you needn't have been so cross."

Helen's nerves were beginning to give way, and she went on childishly. "You act just as if we were going to be together always. Do you know that I'm going away now, and not coming back any more?"

"Yes, Miss Helen."

"And do you think this is the way to treat me at the last moment? Why don't you take the things?"

"I shouldn't wish to be under a compliment, Miss Helen."

"What do you mean by being under a compliment?"

"I shouldn't wish to be beholden."

"Oh, you shouldn't wish, you shouldn't wish! This is too bad!" whimpered Helen. "What am I but under a compliment to you, as you call it? I didn't think you'd behave so at the last moment. But I see. You're too proud for anything, and you never did care for me."

"Oh, Miss Helen!"

"Yes! And *go* to your cousin's,—the quicker the better—and have your own cross way. I'm sure I don't care, if you'll be the happier for it. I can tell you what you are, Margaret: you're a silly goose, and you make every one hate you. The charm's broken between *us*,—quite; and I'm glad of it."

Margaret went out without saying anything, and Helen tried to go on with her dinner, but failed, and began her inventory again, and at last went to her room and dressed for her journey. She came down into the library just before starting, and rang for Margaret. When the cook appeared, the young girl suddenly threw her arms round her neck. "Good-bye," she sobbed out, "you good, old, wicked, foolish, stuck-up Margaret. I'm glad you didn't come to the Butlers', it would have killed me to see you there! Good-bye, good-bye! Remember your poor little Helen, Margaret, and come to see me! I can't bear to look into the kitchen! Say good-bye to it for me! Oh my poor old slighted happy home! Oh my home, my home, my home! Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye!" She ran wildly through the well-known rooms, and bade them adieu with heart-breaking farewells; she stooped down and kissed the lounge, on which her father used to lie, and spread out her empty arms upon it, and laid her homeless head where his had rested. At the sound of the bell she sprang up, and opened the door herself, and fled down the steps, and into the carriage, shrinking into the furthest corner, and thickly hiding her face under her black veil.

She seemed to herself part of a vast train of events, without control, without volition, save the will to obey. She did what she was bid, and the great movement went on. Somewhere must be arrest, somewhere repose, but as yet she could not foresee it, and she could only yield herself to the forces carrying her forward. She was going to the Butlers' because Captain Butler had told her to come; she had assented to everything he proposed because he had seemed to wish it; but she felt that he was as powerless as she in the matter. If he had proposed everything of contrary effect, she must still have yielded the same.

Captain Butler joined her at the station half-an-hour after she had left home, and just in time to step aboard the train with her. He was hot and looked vexed. When he got his breath a little, "Do you know," said he, "that old fool hasn't made any bills?"

"What old fool?" asked Helen passively.

"Margaret!" replied the Captain, with a burst. "Didn't you understand that she meant merely to refuse her wages for the last two weeks, when she said she wished to consider you her guest?"

"Why, yes," said Helen.

"Well, she meant a great deal more," cried the Captain. "I've been round to the butcher and baker and all the rest, to settle their accounts, and I find that she 's paid for everything since we left you. But I shall have it out with her. It won't do. It 's ridiculous!"

"Poor Margaret!" said Helen softly. She under-

stood now the secret of Margaret's intolerable stateliness, and of her reluctance to mar her ideal of hospitality by accepting a reciprocal benefit. It was all very droll and queer, but so like Margaret that Helen did not want so much to laugh as to weep at it. She saw that Captain Butler was annoyed at the way she took the matter, and she thought he would have scolded her at any other time. She said very gently: "We must let her have her way about it, Captain Butler. You couldn't get her to take the money back, and you would only hurt her feelings if you tried. Perhaps I can do something for her some time."

"Do you mean that you 're actually going to stand it, Helen?"

"Yes, why not? It isn't as if anybody else did it for me—any equal, you know. I can't feel that it 's a disgrace, from Margaret; and it will do her so much good—you 've no idea how much. She 's been with us ever since I was born, and surely I may accept such a kindness from an old servant, rather than wound her queer pride."

The Captain listened to these swelling words with dismay. This poor girl, at whose feet he saw destitution yawning, was taking life as she had always done, *en princesse*. He wondered what possible conception she had formed of her situation. Sooner or later he must tell her what it was.

V.

Captain Butler believed that his old friend had died a bankrupt; he represented the estate as insolvent, and the sale of the property took place at the earliest possible day. A red flannel flag, on which the auctioneer's name was lettered, was hung out from the transome above the front door, and at ten o'clock on a dull morning when the sea-turn was beginning to break in a thin, chilly rain, a long procession of umbrellas began to ascend the front steps, where Helen had paused to cast that look of haughty wonder after the retreating policeman. The umbrellas were of all qualities, from the silk that shuts into the slimness of a walking-stick, to the whity-brown, whale-bone ribbed family umbrella, under which the habitual auction-goer of a certain size and age repairs to her favourite amusement. Many of the people had a suburban look, and some even the appearance of having arrived by the Fitchburg railroad; but there was a large proportion of citizens, and a surprising number of fashionably dressed ladies, who, nevertheless, did not seem to be of that neighbourhood; they stared curiously about them, as if they had now for the first time

entered a house there. They sat down in the sad old parlour, and looked up at the pictures and the general equipment of the room with the satisfied air of not finding it after all any better than their own. One large and handsome woman, whose person trembled and twinkled all over with black bugles, stood in the middle of the floor, and had the effect of stamping upon the supposed pride of the place. People were prowling all over the house, from cellar to garret, peering into closets and feeling of walls and doors; several elderly women in feeble health were to be met at the turns of the stairways, pressing their hands against their chests, and catching their breath with difficulty. Few, apparently, of the concourse had come to buy; but when the sale began they densely thronged the rooms in which the bidding successively went on, and made it hard for one another to get out of the packed doorways. The whole morning long the auctioneer intoned his chant of "A half, and a half and half, do-I-hear-the-three-quarters?" varied with a quick "*Sold!*" as from time to time he knocked off this lot or that. The cheaper carpets, chairs, beds, and tables were bought for the most part by certain fading women who bid with a kind of reluctant greed, and got together each her store of those mismated moveables which characterise furnished lodgings. They wore cheap camel's hair wraps and thread gloves; others, who seemed poor mothers of families, showed their black stubbed finger-tips, pressed anxiously together outside the edges of imitation India shawls, and bid upon the

kitchen crockery. The Copleys were bought, as Captain Butler had expected, by the Museum of Fine Arts; the other paintings were bought by men who got them low to sell again, and in whose ruinous bazaars they were destined to consort with second-hand refrigerators and strips of dusty carpeting.

Captain Butler would gladly have stayed away from the auction, but his duty in the matter was not to be avoided. Helen had given him a list of things to be reserved from the sale, which she had made out under two heads. The first was marked "For self," and this was very short, and easily managed by setting the things aside before the sale began. But the list of articles "To be given away," was on a scale which troubled the Captain's conscience, while it forlornly amused him, by its lavish generosity; the girl had done charity to an extent that wronged the creditors of the estate, and that put it quite beyond Captain Butler's power to humour her unwitting munificence by purchasing the things to give away. He used a discretion with which he invested himself, to put all the valuable articles up at the sale, and bestowed in charity only the cheaper matters on Helen's list. Even then, the auction was an expensive affair to him. He was unable to let certain things, with which he intimately associated his old friend, pass into the hands of strangers, especially things connected with the India trade. He bought the Chinese vases and bronze monsters, the terra cotta statues and ivory carvings, the outlandish weapons, and Oriental bricabrac, which in the age

of Eastlake mantel-shelves, then setting in with great severity, he discovered to be in great request.

His dismay increased as these costly and worthless treasures accumulated upon his hands, for his house was already full of them, to the utmost capacity of its closets and out-of-the-way corners. Besides, he laid himself open to the suspicion of bidding in, and remained under that doubt with many. He had a haughty way of outbidding that stood him in no good stead, and went far to convince the crowd that all the sales to him were sham.

The auction, which began in the basement, ascended through the several stories, wandering from room to room till it reached the remotest attic chamber. Then, all the personal property had been sold, and it descended again to the first floor, where the crowd was already much thinner than at first, and was composed mainly of respectable-looking citizens who had come to bid on the house, or to see how much it would bring. The fashionably-dressed women were gone; it was not long before the last auction-goer's whity-brown umbrella, expanded after the usual struggle, went down the front steps, and round the next corner. The auctioneer took his stand in the parlour before the pier-glass,—into which Helen looked that day to see whether her trouble with Robert had changed her,—with the long windows of the swell-front on either side of him. He was a young man, eager to win his reputation. He had been praised to Captain Butler as a frightfully vulgar wretch, who could get him

more for the property than any other auctioneer in the city, and the Captain had taken him with certain misgivings. As he now confronted his respectable audience, he kept his hat a little aslant; he had an unlighted cigar in his left hand, which he put into his mouth from time to time, and chewed upon nervously; his eyes shone with a gross, humorous twinkle, and his whole face expressed a reckless audacity, and a willingness to take other people into the joke of life's being a swindle, anyway.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I feel honoured in being the instrument, however humble, of offering this property to your consideration; this old family mansion, rich in tradition and association, in the very heart of the most select quarter of Boston. You have already examined the house, gentlemen, from attic to cellar, you have seen that it is in perfect repair, and that it has no concealments to make—'nothing extenuate nor aught set down in malice,' as our coloured brother says in the play. I will not insult your intelligence, gentlemen, by dwelling upon its entire soundness. Built forty years ago, it is this day a better house than the day its foundations were laid—better than nine-tenths of the gaudy and meretricious conceptions of modern architecture. Plain, substantial, soberly elegant,—these, gentlemen, are its virtues, which, like

> 'A bold peasantry, their country's pride,
> When once destroyed, can never be supplied.'

Gentlemen, I will not ask your attention to the eligible

position of the house. I see none but Boston faces here, and I am proud to take it for granted that you need no instructions from *me* upon this point. When I say that this is one of the best sites on Beacon Hill, I say everything. You know the value of the location, you know the character of the social surroundings,—you know what I *mean*, and *all* that I mean. I do not appeal to strangers here. I appeal to the old Boston blood, animated by a generous affection for our city and its history, and unwilling to see dishonour cast upon her by the sale, even in these ruinous times, of a property in her midst at less than its full value. Gentlemen, I feel that you will stand by me in this matter; and I have the pleasure of opening the sale with a bid of $10,000. Is this so, Mr. Wetherall?"

The gentleman addressed, in the midst of the laughing crowd, nodded slightly.

The auctioneer looked keenly at the faces in an irregular semicircle before him. "With a bid of $10,000 from Mr. Wetherall," he resumed. "Mr. Wetherall, gentlemen, does not want the property, and he does not dream of getting it at a sixth or seventh—in any other times I should say a tenth—of its value. But he does not choose that it shall be disgraced by the offer of any ignobler sum; and, gentlemen, if Mr. Wetherall had not made this bid I should have made it myself in good faith. I am offered ten thousand, ten thousand, ten thous—*eleven*, from Mr. Wheeler. *You* don't want the property either, Mr. Wheeler, but I thank you nevertheless. Eleven,

eleven, eleven—do I hear the twelve? Twelve from Mr. White. The W.'s are doing well, but we must mount higher yet in the alphabet. Twelve, do I hear the thirteen? Five hundred! Thanks: twelve five, twelve five—thirteen. Going at thirteen, at thirteen—fourteen! This is something like, gentlemen; this is very good as a genteel relaxation; fourteen has its merits as part of the joke; but, gentlemen, we must not give too much *time* to it. We *must* come to business, before long; we must indeed. I am willing to accept these ironical bids for the present, but—fifteen, did you say, Mr. Newell? Thank—you for fifteen. I am offered fifteen, fifteen, fifteen, by an eminent American humorist; fifteen, fifteen, going at fifteen? Oh come, gentlemen! Some one say *twenty*, and let the sale begin *seriously*." Nobody had bidden twenty, but at that moment a greedy-eyed, nervous little man, with a hot air of having hurried to arrive, wedged his way through the people who filled the doorway, and entered the opener space inside with a bid of five hundred. A roar of laughter rewarded his ardour, and the auctioneer instantly went on: "Twenty thousand, five; twenty thousand, five. Now we are really warming to the work. We have reached the point at which blood begins to tell. Twenty thousand, five from Mr. Everton—do I hear the twenty-one? Yes, right again; I *do* hear the twenty-one, and from Mr. Newell, who redeems his reputation from the charge of elegant trifling, and twenty-two from Mr. White, who also perceives that the time for

jesting is past. Going at twenty-two, at twenty-two, twenty-two! Do I hear twenty-three? No, only twenty-two, three; I regret to say it is only twenty-two, three."

A quick succession of small bids now ran the sum up to twenty-four thousand, at which point it hung in spite of all the devices of the auctioneer to urge it beyond. "Going, going, going,"—he swung his right hand threatingly above the open palm of his left—"going to Mr. White at *twenty*-four thousand dollars! Are you all done?" He scanned the crowd, and pierced it to the outer circle with his audacious glance. "Going at twenty-four thousand dollars to Mr. White. Are you all done, twice? Are you all done, three times? Going once, going twice, going—Gentlemen," said the auctioneer, putting his cigar in his mouth and his thumbs in his waistcoat-pockets, and addressing them in a low, impassioned tone, "Gentlemen, it's no *money* for it! I should feel ashamed, personally disgraced, if this property went for such a sum. I should *know* that it was owing to some fault of mine, some failure on my part to impress its value upon you. But I have trusted to your own sagacity, to your own intelligence, to the fact that you are all Boston men, and thoroughly acquainted with the prices of adjacent property, and the worth of this. I may have deceived myself; but I appeal to you *now*, gentlemen, not to let me suffer by the confidence I have reposed in you. My professional repute is in your hands. If this estate goes at $24,000 I am a ruined man." A general laugh, in

which the auctioneer himself joined so far as to smile, met this appeal. He ran his eye over the assembly. Suddenly he exclaimed, "*Thank* you, Mr. Everton! *Was* it twenty-six!" He leaned forward over his desk, and beamed with a flattering gratitude upon the new-comer.

"No, twenty-four, fifty," replied Mr. Everton in a weak, dry voice.

"Thank you all the same, Mr. Everton. You are none the less my preserver. Thank you for twenty-four, fifty. We breathe again. Twenty-four, fifty, —do I hear the five? *Twenty-four, fifty,*—will you give me the five? Twenty-five, very good, twenty-five thousand, twenty-five, twenty-five—just one-fourth of the worth of the estate in prosperous times. Now let me hear the twenty-six! Gentlemen," said the auctioneer, again breaking from his chant, and lowering his voice to the colloquial tone, "you all know the old story of the sibyl and her books: how, when she came with nine copies in the first instance, she asked a sum which struck the officials as a fancy price; how she went away and burnt three of the edition and then asked twice the original price for the six; and how, when she had burnt three more, they were glad to take the rest off her hands at her own terms. We have here a parallel case."

"Don't see the parallel," said one of the crowd.

"Don't you, Mr. Rogers? Well, you will, presently, when you've failed to buy this property for half the money that you'd be glad to offer the pur-

chaser for his bargain. Do I hear twenty-six from you, Mr. Rogers?" Mr. Rogers laughed and nodded. "Twenty-six it is from Mr. Rogers. Twenty-six, twenty-six, twenty-six, will you give me the seven?" He went on crying this sum in varying tones of exultation, reproach, and persuasion for several minutes. Again and again he brought himself to the point of knocking off the house at that price, and then retired from it upon some fresh pretence of having heard a higher bid. But none came, or could be made to seem to have come; every one to whom he turned with a questioning look shook his head in prompt denial. The auctioneer's mobile countenance took on an air of deep discouragement. He threw aside his mallet, and pulled down his waistcoat. "I won't sell this property at that price. I suppose there are men in this city who *would* do it, but *I* won't. Captain Butler, I should like a word with you." He came down from his perch, and retiring to a corner with the Captain talked with him in a dumb show of bitter and passionate appeal. When he again mounted to his place, he wore a look of grim despair. "Well, gentlemen, I have done my best to persuade Captain Butler to withdraw the property, and stop this bloody sacrifice." The crowd laughed and the auctioneer's eye twinkled. "But he feels bound by the terms of his notice to you to let the sale proceed. The property will be sold without reserve. Now let us see whether you will meet him in the same magnanimous spirit." Captain Butler looked on in blank amaze while this statement was making; but an intenser

surprise was painted upon the face of Mr. Wetherall as the auctioneer proceeded: "Twenty-seven, twenty-seven."

"Twenty-six was the last bid," said a bystander.

"*Ex*cuse me, sir," retorted the auctioneer severely, "I don't think I deceived myself in a nod from my friend Mr. Wetherall. Twenty-*seven!*"

Mr. Wetherall seemed struggling to open his petrified mouth in protest, when Mr. Everton quickly bid twenty-seven five hundred. Mr. Wetherall turned sharply upon him and bid twenty-eight. The keen auctioneer scented their rivalry, and played upon it so artfully that in five minutes the property was going at thirty thousand to Mr. Everton. He came to the third going, in his thrice-repeated warning, when he once more paused, and leaning forward, bent a look of pitying incredulity upon the faces before him. "Gentlemen," he asked in an accent of soft reproach, "is this *Boston?*"

His audience again roared their pleasure, and the auctioneer, leaving his place, stepped forward and personally approached several gentlemen of the group in a conversational tone. "Mr. Wetherall, am I going to have nothing more from you? Mr. White, what do you say? You know this house is worth more than thirty thousand, and whoever buys it will have a dozen people after him to-morrow offering to take his bargain off his hands at an advance. Mr. Merritt, we haven't heard from you at all yet, I believe. You've been enjoying the show for nothing: it isn't your custom to dead-head yourself

on these occasions. And you, sir,—I can't call your name, but I know your face; I 've seen it in State Street often—can't I get a bid out of you?" The gentleman addressed coloured, and shrank further back in the crowd. The auctioneer smiled in perfect good-humour, and turned away for another word with Captain Butler in private.

"Captain," he whispered, "Mr. Everton is going to buy this property. Do you think he will stand another five thousand?"

Captain Butler, who seemed in a sort of daze, said, "I don't believe he will. But *if* you—"

"I 'll get it," said the auctioneer briskly, and returned to his work, into which he struck with a sudden and startling energy. "Going at thirty thousand, go—. Thirty-one, thirty-one, thirty-one; at thirty-two; thirty-two, five; thirty-three, thirty-three—and five; thirty-four!" He clashed off the bids with a rapid confidence that would have inspired belief in the most sceptical. Mr. Wetherall bid thirty-four thousand five hundred, and was instantly topped by Mr. Everton at thirty-five. "Thirty-five, thirty-five, thirty-five," cried the auctioneer, "going at *thirty*-five thousand, going, going, going, and sold—*given* away—to Mr. Everton!"

Mr. Everton came forward, with a half-frightened look, and laid down the money necessary to secure his purchase, and received a provisional deed of the property.

"Look here!" said Captain Butler, as soon as he could get the auctioneer aside, "I didn't hear any of

these bids till Wetherall's last." The Captain looked troubled and unhappy.

The auctioneer laid a re-assuring hand upon his shoulder. "You haven't got a practised ear, Captain Butler. *I have.* Mr. Everton has got a great bargain. But it was *hard,* working up to that final point."

VI.

"WHAT perplexed me the most about it," said the Captain to Mrs. Butler, when he came home the day after the sale, "was that the auctioneer had so misrepresented his first talk with me. He never asked me to withdraw the property at all; he knew I couldn't; he merely offered to bet me that he would get thirty thousand for it. Well! I don't see what I could do about it. I couldn't have proved that the bids were fictitious, and the attempt to try would have made a great scandal. That's the way Hibbard looks at it; I went to him for advice; I put the case to him, and he says that there's no way of going back of the fact, for the auctioneer would swear, to save himself, that he heard the bids, or thought he did. *Most* probably he *did;* it was all confusion; and my not having heard them proves nothing at all. Besides, Everton was not obliged to bid thirty-five thousand, and he *did* get a great bargain. The property is worth fifty, in any decent times. And that extra five thousand is a perfect godsend for Helen, poor girl! It's all she'll have in the world. I tell you, my dear, I haven't had many things in life that gave me more satisfaction

than meeting the principal creditors to-day. You see, when I looked into his affairs with Joshua the day he died I was very badly discouraged. They were all in confusion; he seemed to have lost his grip of them; I suppose it was his failing health, but he couldn't make head or tail of anything; and when I was appointed administrator I reported the estate insolvent. It was precipitate—"

"It was like you, my dear," said Mrs. Butler. "You never believe that anything is wrong till you believe that everything is wrong."

"Well, well—very likely," returned the Captain. "I had what I thought very good reasons for my course. But afterwards I set a shrewd hand at work on the books, and we found out that things were very much better, as I told you at the time. When a man's affairs are in such confusion as Joshua's, the confusion is usually against him, but in this case it was mostly for him. There wasn't a day after I reported the estate insolvent that the case didn't brighten. If it had been any other case, I should have been mortified at the way things turned out. To be sure, I didn't believe there 'd be anything for Helen, but before the sale I saw that unless the property went for nothing the estate would pay all Joshua's debts, dollar for dollar. This morning we called a meeting of the creditors. They had the notion they were going to lose, and they were prepared for that. When I told them how matters really stood they were tremendously taken aback. But they had behaved very handsomely all along,

out of respect for Joshua's memory, and they came out strong now about him, and said such things—well, *I* can't tell you," said the Captain. "But," he added confusedly, "I wish Harkness could have been there!"

"Perhaps he was," said Mrs. Butler devoutly.

"Eh?" cried the Captain sharply. "Ah! Yes! Well, perhaps. Old Rogers asked me to wait a minute, and they had a little confabulation among themselves, and then Rogers came forward and asked if there would be anything left for Helen. Then I told them the estate had yielded $5000 more than the indebtedness, so far as I knew of it; and we had congratulations all round, and if Joshua had been alive to resume, he might have started business again on a better basis than ever he had in his life. I wish —confound it!—I could be sure about those bids."

"Why, my dear!" cried his wife, "you talk as if some fraud had been really committed. Can't you look at it as Mr. Hibbard does? Probably the man *did* hear the bids. He wouldn't have *dared* to pretend that he heard them; it wouldn't have been safe for him."

"No," said the Captain thoughtfully. "Why, of course not," he added briskly, after a moment. "Of course you're right about it. He wouldn't have dared. Where's Helen?"

He went down and found Helen on the rocks by the sea, where she often strayed apart from the others; they did not follow her, they respected her right to what solitude she would. Her sorrow was no longer a thing of tears and sobs; but it

was no more comprehensible than at first; her bereavement still seemed the one great unreasoned fact of the universe. She turned the pathos of her bewildered smile upon the Captain, as she heard him climbing the rocks behind her, and rose to meet him.

"No, sit down," he said. "I want to have a little talk with you, Helen, as your man of business."

"You 're my man of business as—as—papa was," said Helen, with a grateful look.

"Thank you, my dear, for that," answered the Captain. "I 've only tried to do what he would have done for my girls. I don't know, my dear, whether I had ever given you the idea that your father was in embarrassed circumstances?"

"O yes; I knew that," said Helen.

"Well, we won't enlarge upon the fact. It isn't necessary. Would you like me to go into particulars about the settlement of the estate?"

"No," answered Helen, "that isn't necessary either. I shouldn't be any the wiser if you did. Tell me whatever you think I ought to know, Captain Butler."

"I was very much afraid, my dear," said the Captain, "when I began to look into your father's affairs that there would be nothing, or worse than nothing, left." This did not seem to affect Helen as a matter of personal concern, and the Captain went on: "There was a time when I was afraid that the creditors would not get more than seventy-five per cent. of their money, and might be very glad to get

that." Helen looked round at the Captain with a quick glance, as if here were something that touched her. "But as I got along towards the bottom, things looked better, and I saw that unless the sale turned out very badly, we should save ourselves. The sale turned out far beyond my expectations.—Helen," cried the Captain, "the prospect now is that I shall pay up every cent that your father owed in the world, and have some five thousand dollars left for you."

"Oh, Captain Butler!"

"It isn't a great sum—"

"It 's more than I dared to dream of!"

"But if it 's carefully handled, it can be made to go a great way."

"Oh, it 's ample, ample! But I don't care for that. What I think of—and I feel like going down on my knees for it—is that no one loses anything by papa. He would rather have died than wronged any one, and that any one should have suffered by him after he was helpless to repair the wrong, *that* would have been more than the bitterness of death to me. Oh, I 'm so happy about this, Captain Butler; you can't think how much more of a comfort it is than anything else could have been!"

"You 're a good girl, Helen," said the Captain, with a reverent fondness; "you 're your father's girl, my dear. He would have died a rich man if he had not stood by people whom he knew to be in a bad way, because they had helped him long ago, when it was no risk for them to do so."

"He was right!" cried Helen. "He would not have been papa if he had done less."

"I should not have said he was right," said Captain Butler, "if he had not believed that he had already put you beyond want. He had insured his life for twenty-five thousand dollars in the Metropolitan Reciprocal; but that went to pieces two years ago."

"That's nothing. I couldn't have managed so much money," promptly answered Helen. "The five thousand will be enough, and more than enough, for my utmost desires. I'm not extravagant. I can get on with very little, and this is wildly abundant."

The Captain, from rejoicing in her mood, suddenly looked aghast, as if a terrible idea had presented itself. "You understand, Helen," he said, "that it will be some time yet—six months at least—before I can place the money due you at your disposal. It isn't certainly due you till all the creditors have had full notice to present their claims, and these have been passed upon by the commissioners."

"Oh, that makes no difference," said Helen. "I'm in no haste for the money."

"And you understand," pursued the Captain, as if this were really the point he wished to insist on, "that it is only five thousand?"

"O yes, I understand perfectly," quickly answered the girl, and then she stopped, and cast a keen glance at the Captain, without, however, seeming to perceive his chopfallen aspect: she was, perhaps, looking deeper.

"You haven't brought any more letters for me, I suppose?" she said.

"No, I must have got everything the last time," replied the Captain. "I went carefully through all the drawers again before the sale began."

"I shall ask you to take care of those law-papers for me, Captain Butler; I don't know what to do with them. The letters were all recent ones. I thought there might have been some old ones. Not that I have missed any. But you did sometimes lose home letters when you were off on those long voyages of yours, didn't you?"

"No, very few," the Captain responded. "We get them nearly all, sooner or later."

"But sometimes they had to wander about after you?"

"Yes, sometimes. And sometimes they waited."

"It must have been terribly distressing," said Helen, "to wait for them."

"Well," returned the Captain, "that depended a good deal on whom the letter was from." Helen flushed a little. "There were some letters that I shouldn't have cared if I'd never got. But, generally speaking, the fellows in the navy had the advantage of us in the merchant service."

"I don't see why," said Helen.

"Oh, their letters were addressed to them through the Navy Department, and of course they came the straightest and safest way. I recollect once at Singapore," and the Captain went on with much circumstance to give a case in point. Helen had furnished

him a thread of associations which the Captain never willingly dropped. She listened at first with interest, then patience, then respect. At last she said it was getting a little chilly, and Captain Butler agreed that it was. They went back to the house together, and parted on the piazza, where Helen paused a moment to say: "I haven't thanked you, Captain Butler, because it seemed no use to try. Where should I end?"

"Don't begin," said the Captain, with the smile which he kept for Helen; she was as dear to him as his own daughters, and just strange enough to be a colour of romance in his thoughts. It always astonished him, and slightly abashed him that she should be a young lady; she had so long been a little girl.

She looked fondly into his kind eyes. "It is too much—too much!" she cried, and slipped away with a fallen head.

The words made the Captain think of the money again, and the smile went and the trouble came back to his face, as he walked away to find his wife.

"Well?" said Mrs. Butler.

"Catharine," said the Captain, "I'm afraid she thinks it's five thousand a year."

"O *no*, she doesn't!" pleaded his wife.

"Yes, she does, my dear. She spoke of it as an enormous sum, and I hadn't the courage to make the thing clear. I began to, and then gave it up. I don't see what's to be done about it. I'm afraid it's going to be a dreadful blow when she finds out

what it really is." Captain Butler looked ruefully at his wife.

"I think you're mistaken," said Mrs. Butler. "It's her ignorance of money that makes her think of five thousand, and not the income from it; but as you've raised the doubt she must be told that it is not five thousand a year, and she must be told just how much it is." The Captain groaned. "But you needn't tell her, John. You've gone through quite enough. *I* will tell her."

Captain Butler looked ashamed, but relieved. "Well, my dear, I must let you. It's shirking, but I can't help it. You can manage it better than I can. When I think of telling that poor child how very little better than a beggar she is, my tongue turns to a chip in my mouth."

"Yes, it's hard. But suppose she'd had nothing?"

"Then something better than this might have been done with the creditors. Some were old friends. But you can't ask people to help a girl who has five thousand dollars. It sounds preposterous."

"I doubt whether Helen would have allowed herself to be helped in that way if she had known it, and how could it have been kept from her?" Mrs. Butler rose to go to another room.

"Catharine," asked the Captain, "was it at Singapore that I got that first letter of yours, after it had chased me round so long?"

"No; it was at Cape Town," said Mrs. Butler. "Why?"

"I told Helen it was at Singapore."

"How in the world came you to be talking to Helen of our old love-letters, my dear?"

"Oh, she was asking if letters to the East didn't often get lost. I don't know why she should have happened to ask. But she did."

"I suppose," said Mrs. Butler simply, "she is going to write to Robert Fenton."

A light dawned upon Captain Butler; he laughed in a shamefaced way, and then he frowned a little. "Why didn't she ask me outright which was the best way to address him?"

"How *could* she? She couldn't have asked her own father. You wouldn't have wished your own daughter to do it."

"Yes, I should," defiantly answered the Captain.

"Well, she wouldn't," replied Mrs. Butler. The Captain was silenced, but not satisfied. He suffered Mrs. Butler to go, but remained still with that duped smile, and did not half like it.

That night Helen came rather late and tapped at Mrs. Butler's door. "It's I—Helen—Mrs. Butler. Can I speak with you?"

"Yes, come in, Helen."

She pushed in impetuously. "I came to ask Captain Butler's pardon for the mean little intriguing way I got out of him how to address a letter to Robert Fenton. He must have told you!"

"He said you asked him if his letters from home weren't lost sometimes," said Mrs. Butler, with a little smile. "*I* understood, my dear," she added,

leaning forward to smooth Helen's hair, where she had sunk on the cricket at her feet. "It was a perfectly natural thing."

"O yes, only *too* natural with *me!* But I hate and detest all that beating round the bush, in me, even when I 'm doing it; and what I came for *now*, Mrs. Butler, is to ask you *how* I had better write to Robert." Neither found anything worthy of remark in this second avowal of purpose, which might be said in a manner to supersede the first. "If it hadn't been for my wretched shilly-shallying ways, I shouldn't have to write to him at all. But now I must. There is something—something—that I must tell him for his own sake, and—for his peace of mind. For if a person hates any one, especially if it 's through a mistake, I don't think we ought to let any foolish pride interfere; do you, Mrs. Butler?"

"No, Helen," said Mrs. Butler, with perfect intelligence.

"That 's what I think too, and it would be perfectly easy—more than easy—to write and tell him that, and take the consequences, whatever they were. You see it is just this: we had a quarrel before he went away,—or not a quarrel, but a misunderstanding; that is, *he* misunderstood—and he was so vexed with me that he wouldn't come to say good-bye. I don't care for that. He did perfectly right. But what I *can't* forgive is his not trying to see papa, and bid *him* good-bye. I can't bear to have him think any longer that I was trifling with him, and yet I can't write to him, when I think of the way he

treated papa. It seems very bad-hearted in him. Of course, I didn't see how he *could* have borne to see papa under the circumstances, and feeling the way he did towards me; and, of course, if papa had lived it would have been different, and if it hadn't been for me, I know Robert wouldn't have done it, for he's one of the best and kindest—" Helen stopped, and Mrs. Butler waited a moment before she answered.

"Did you ever think, Helen, that Robert loved your father like—not like you, not like a daughter—but like a son?"

"Why, papa had always *been* a father to him!" cried Helen. "Why shouldn't he?"

"And were *you* never remiss with your father, because you trusted that somehow, sometime, the love you felt for him would more than make it up to him?"

"Oh, a thousand times!" cried Helen, bowing her head on Mrs. Butler's knees.

The pale hand continued to stroke her hair. "That's a risk we all take with those we love. It's an earnest of something hereafter, perhaps. But for this world it isn't safe. Go, and write your letter, my dear, and give Robert all our love."

Mrs. Butler leaned forward, and kissed the beautiful head good-night, and Helen, after a silent embrace, went back to her room again. It was easy now to write the letter which she had found so hard before, and a deep peace was in her heart when she read it over, and found no shadow of resentment or unkind-

ness in it. She was glad to have abased herself so utterly before him, to have put herself so completely in his power. Now he might do as he pleased, but he never could have it to say that he had misunderstood her, or that he had cause to think her proud or cruel.

"Dear Robert," the letter ran, "it is five weeks now since papa died. I wrote you a line to tell you the sad news as soon as I could bring myself to put it in words, and I suppose you will get that letter before this reaches you. But for fear that it may fail (I sent you a newspaper with the account, too), I will tell you again, that it was very sudden, and while I was away here at Beverley, where he expected to join me in a day or two. It was at his office; Captain Butler was there with him. I thought I could tell you more about it; but I cannot. He died of a disease of the heart. I will send a cutting from another newspaper that will tell you more.

"The day before papa died I told him everything about that last letter I wrote you, and he took your part. The last words he spoke of you were full of affection and sympathy. I thought you would like to know this. You were mistaken about that letter. Read it again, and see if it doesn't mean something different. But I'm afraid you tore it up in your disgust with me. Well, then, I must tell you. *I did love you all the time.* There,—I don't care what you think of me. You can't think less of me than I do.

"The house has been sold, and everything in it.

Papa did not leave a will, but I know he would have liked you to have his watch, and I am keeping that for you.

"I am with the Butlers at Beverley. They have been everything to me, and are everything.

"HELEN."

In Helen's tall hand it took three sheets of note-paper to hold this letter; the paper was very thin, but she put on a double postage to make perfectly sure, and she kept the letter till she went up to Boston, and then posted it herself in the general post-office.

VII.

HELEN had been three weeks at the Butlers', and, in spite of their goodness, which guarded her freedom, as well as all her wishes, she began to feel a constraint which she could not throw off. Life had come to a pause with her, and when it should move forward it must be seriously, and even sadly; and she was morbidly conscious that she somehow clogged the joyous march of Marian Butler's days. There had been an effort to keep out of her sight the preparations for the wedding, till she had protested against it, and demanded to see every dress. But this very demand emphasised the dark difference between her fate and her friend's, and Marian was apologetically happy in Helen's presence, however they both tried to have it otherwise. Once Marian had explained with tears that she would like to put it off for Helen's sake, if she could, but the time of the marriage had been fixed with regard to so many other matters that it could not be postponed. Helen had answered that Marian made her very wretched talking of such a thing, and that she must go at once if Marian spoke of it again. They had embraced with perfect tenderness and sympathy, and Helen

had remained with the helpless feeling of her incongruity in a house of rejoicing. It seemed to her intolerable that she must bring her sorrow thither; she suffered till she could get away with it; all they did to make her feel at ease could only heighten her trouble. She had waited with a painful patience till the Captain should report to her on the settlement of her father's affairs, and she could begin to shape her future; now that he had spoken she need wait no longer.

She found Mrs. Butler in the parlour the morning after she had written to Robert.

"Mrs. Butler," she said, "I want you to let me go away next week."

"I can't bear to have you talk of leaving us, Helen!" cried Mrs. Butler, with a wistful trouble in her eyes and voice, yet as if she had expected this.

"Yes, I know," returned Helen, "but I must go. It's foolish and useless to keep staying on; and now that I've made up my feeble mind about it, don't try to stop me."

"Helen," said Mrs. Butler, "don't go! We all want you to stay. We want you to go to Europe with us—to be our guest, our child. Put away your scruples, my dear—I understand them, and honour them—and go with us."

"You know I can't, Mrs. Butler."

"But if your father had been living, you would have felt free to accept our invitation."

"Perhaps. But it would have been different then. Don't press me."

"I 'm sorry, Helen," sighed Mrs. Butler. "I won't press you. But stay with us, my dear. It does us good to have you. Mr. Butler and I often talk of it; we all feel it. Say that you 'll stay till we go away, and then we 'll feel as if we had parted because we must." Helen was standing before Mrs. Butler, who had the girl's hands in hers, as she sat in her easy-chair, and looked up into her evasive face.

"No," said Helen, gently taking away her hands, and sitting down near the other, "I couldn't. *Don't* let us deceive ourselves. I 'm a shadow in the house; we all know it, and feel it. Nobody 's to blame, nobody can help it," she added quickly, to stay a protest from Mrs. Butler, "but it 's true. You see how I have to take my blackness out of the room when your friends come; I give them a painful shock when they catch sight of me; it checks the pleasant things they would like to say; and I hate myself for glooming about the house in secret; I feel that I must cast a shadow on them even through the walls and floors."

"Helen, dear, there 's no friend we have who is so precious to us as you are!"

"O yes—yes! I know how kind you are. But you see it can't be. I should have to go away at the time of the wedding, and you had better let me go before."

"Go away at the time of Marian's wedding? Not be— Why, Helen!"

"Yes. Think, Mrs. Butler! It couldn't be."

Mrs. Butler was silent. "I shouldn't care for myself, and I know you wouldn't care for yourselves; but the others have some rights which we mustn't overlook. I should throw a chill over everything. I couldn't endure that, and you can't persuade me, Mrs. Butler; you mustn't try."

Mrs. Butler looked really disconsolate. Helen was right; there was no possibility of gainsaying her, much less of outreasoning her; and Mrs. Butler was one of those feminine temperaments, rather commoner in New England than elsewhere, whom a good reason absolutely silences: they may not often have it themselves, but their reverence for truth and a clear conclusion is such that they must bow to it in others. The most that she could say was, "But you will come back to us afterwards, Helen? You will come after Marian is gone, to comfort us, won't you? It will be a month before we shall sail, and we should so like to have you with us. We shall not be gay ourselves, then, and you will feel more at home. I won't oppose you now, dear, but you 'll promise me that!"

"Yes," answered Helen, "I 'll come back, then, if you want me."

"And where are you going, now? Where do you mean to stay?"

"I don't know. I thought I should go to the Miss Amys—you remember them, don't you?—and ask them to let me stay with them for the present. I know they sometimes take people to board."

"O yes, I remember them—on West Pomegranate

Street; one of those pleasant old houses, with the threshold level with the side-walk. It will be a good place," said Mrs. Butler, cheered with the thought. "You must let Mr. Butler arrange for you. He—"

"No," said Helen promptly; "I am not going to trouble Captain Butler any more. I must begin taking care of myself now, and I can't begin too soon. I have my own money, and I ought to know how to use it." Human nature is such a very simple as well as complex thing, that Helen could feel a childish pride in being absolute mistress of a certain sum, and for the moment could forget the loss that had endowed her with it. "I am going to be very saving of it, Mrs. Butler." She smiled, but the smile took away all hope from Mrs. Butler. She looked at Helen in despair, and did not know how to begin what she felt it on her conscience to say at once.

"Oh, Helen!" she broke out, and then checked herself.

"What, Mrs. Butler?" asked the girl, startled by her accent.

"Oh, nothing! I mean—has Mr. Butler told you how much it is?" Mrs. Butler was ashamed of her flighty reluctance and indecision, and now took herself firmly in hand.

"Yes, it's five thousand dollars—so much more than I ever—"

"Did you understand," interrupted Mrs. Butler, "that it's only five thousand in all? Not—not five

thousand a year?" Mrs. Butler was prepared for the worst dismay that Helen could show, but Helen showed none. On the contrary, she gave a little laugh.

"Five thousand a *year?* *No* indeed! Why, Mrs. Butler, what have you been thinking of? That would be insanity."

Mrs. Butler looked like one to whom the worst dismay might have been welcomer than this cheerfulness: this might be a far more hopeless condition than the realisation of the fact that the sum of five thousand dollars was not a fortune; Helen might be thinking it was. Mrs. Butler felt obliged to ask: "Do you know how much that will give you to live on?"

"Not exactly," said Helen, "but not much, I suppose."

Perhaps she thought a thousand a year. Mrs. Butler must still go on. "Some of Mr. Butler's Chicago mortgages bring him nine per cent. That would be five times ninety—four hundred and fifty?"

"Oh, I should never send *my* money away to Chicago. I want it where I can put my hand on it at once. I shall deposit it in savings-banks—like Margaret—at six per cent., and then I shall get three hundred a year from it."

"But, poor child! you can't live upon that," Mrs. Butler besought her.

"No, I must do something. I'm determined *never* to encroach upon the principal, whatever happens.

Don't you think that's the right way? I've always heard that it's perfectly ruinous to live upon your principal."

Mrs. Butler could not combat these just conceptions. "Have you thought what you shall do, Helen?" she asked.

"Yes, I've been thinking about it nearly all night. I couldn't sleep, and I thought I might as well think. I couldn't decide. But one thing I have made up my mind I shall not do: I shall not paint holly-wood boxes." They both laughed, the elder lady pityingly and reluctantly. "In the first place, I paint horridly; but that wouldn't make any difference. What I couldn't do would be to ask the outrageous prices which holly-wood boxes bring from sympathising friends when painted by young ladies in need. Besides, I think the market must be overstocked. Only consider, Mrs. Butler, how many holly-wood boxes must have been painted by this time, and what stores of them people must have laid by, that they couldn't give away if Christmas came twice a year from now till the millennium. And all so much alike, too: a farm-house very deep in the snow; the moon monopolising the sky, and Santa Claus, very fuzzy all over, and much too large for his sleigh, with his reindeers and his pipe just of a size; and fat robins at each end of the box. No, you needn't be afraid of holly-wood boxes from *me*, Mrs. Butler."

"Oh, Helen, you queer child!" laughed Mrs. Butler helplessly.

"But I *will* confess that when I thought of doing

something for myself, holly-wood boxes popped into my head the first thing. I suppose there 's really no getting away from them. And, O yes ! I thought of something else ; I thought of parlour-readings. What should you think of parlour-readings, Mrs. Butler ?"

Mrs. Butler visibly cowered under the proposition, and Helen gave a wild laugh. "'How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix,' don't you know ? and Poe's 'Bells ;' and 'Curfew shall not ring to-night.' How would that do ? Don't you believe that if it could be generally given out, I might be handsomely bought off by public subscription ? But I really needn't do anything at once, Mrs. Butler," Helen went on seriously. "I've got clothes enough to last me indefinitely, for I shall expect to make over and *make* over, now ; and I shall take a very cheap little room at the Miss Amys', and think it all over very carefully, and look about before I attempt anything. I'm not afraid : I can do all sorts of things. Don't—don't—sympathise with me !" she added, suddenly breaking. "That *kills* me ! It disheartens me more than anything."

"She understands perfectly well how much she 's got," Mrs. Butler reported to her husband. "She had worked out just how much income it would be, and she says she expects to do something to help herself. But she is so cheerful about it that I don't believe she does. There 's something between her and Robert Fenton."

"It would be the best thing that could happen," said the Captain, with a sigh of relief. "I hope to

the Lord it 's so ! But he 's off for three years !" he added, with dismay.

"She doesn't think of that. Or perhaps she hopes he can get leave to come home—or something. Besides, such a girl as Helen could wait thirty years," said Mrs. Butler, viewing the affair in the heroical abstract. "Her hope and her trust will support her."

"Morally, perhaps. But she would have to be supported otherwise," said the Captain. He refused to be wholly comforted by his wife's manner. Still, its probability, in the absence of anything more substantial, afforded him a measure of consolation. At any rate it was, to his thinking, the sole hopeful outlook for Helen. Since the hard times began he had seen so much futile endeavour by able and experienced men, to get something to do for even a scanty living, that he had grown sceptical of all endeavour at self-help. Every year he was called upon to assist at the disillusion of a score or more of bright young spirits fresh from the University, with their academic honours still green upon their brows, and eager for victory in the battle of life. He knew the boys' fathers and mothers, and of what excellent stock they came, what honest fellows they were, and what good reason there was to believe them capable of bearing their part with distinction in any place demanding quality and talent, and training. But there seemed to be no such place for them ; the world in which their sires had prospered did not want them, did not know what to do with them. Through the strange blight which had fallen upon a land where there should be work for

every one, and success for every one willing to work, there seemed to be nothing but idleness and defeat for these young men in the city of their ancestry and birth. They were fit to lead in any commonwealth, but the commonillness apparently would not have them; they were somehow anachronisms in their own day and generation; they were too far before or too far behind their time. The Captain saw them dispersed in a various exile. Some tried cattle-raising in Colorado; some tried sheep-farming in Virginia, and some sheep-ranching in California. There were others who tried cotton-planting in the South and the orange-culture in Florida; there were others yet, bolder and more imaginative, who tried the milk-farming in Massachusetts. The Captain heard of their undertakings, and then he saw them with their hats scrupulously on, at the club, which a few of their comrades had in a superior wisdom never abandoned.

They had got back, and they were not to blame. Perhaps there was some error in the training of these young gentlemen, which had not quite fitted them to solve the simple yet exacting problem of making a living. But then, people who had worked hard all their lives were not now solving this problem. Captain Butler thought of these nice fellows, and how willing and helpless they were, and then he thought, with compassion too keen for any expression but grim laughter, of such a girl as Helen, and what her training was for the task of taking care of herself. It was probably the same as Marian's, and he knew

what that was. They had in fact gone to the same schools, and grown through the same circumstances into the same society, in which everything they had been and had done fitted them to remain, and which was very charming and refined, and good in a good sense, and so very, very far from doing anything for anything but culture's, or pleasure's, or kindness' sake.

At five or six years of age, Helen had begun to go with the other little girls of her station in life to a school, in which the established language was French, and in which she acquired a graceful and ladylike use of that tongue. It stood her in good stead when she went abroad one summer with her father, and she found that she spoke it as correctly as most English girls she met, and a great deal more readily. But she had too much sense to be sure of her accent or her syntax; at Paris she found that her French was good, but with a difference, and she would not have dreamt of such a thing as teaching it. In fact she had not thought of that at any time, and she had no such natural gift for languages as would have enabled her to master it without such a design.

From this school she went to others, where she was taught what people must learn, with thoroughness and with an intelligence very different alike from the old-fashioned methods of young ladies' establishments, and from the hard, mechanical processes of the public schools. She was made to feel an enlightened interest in her studies; she liked some of them very much, and she respected

those she did not like. Still she had not shown a passionate preference for any particular branch of learning; she had a ladylike ease and kindness withal; if she really hated anything it was mathematics, but because she hated this she had been the more conscientiously attentive to it. She had a good taste in music, and fair skill. After she left school, she had a musical enthusiasm, in the height of which she devoted herself under her German instructor to many hours of practice every day, and had her own ideas of becoming a great performer. But these gave way to clearer conceptions of her powers, and she remained an impassioned amateur of musical genius in others. She went devotedly to all the private *musicales;* she was unfailing at the rehearsals of the Symphony Concerts, and of the Handel and Haydn Society. She made her father join the Apollo Club for her, and she made him go to some of the concerts with her. In those days her talk was of Bach and Beethoven; she thought poorly of Italian music, though she was very fond of the Italian operas.

It was to this period that her passion for the German language also belonged. She had studied German at school, of course, but it was not till after leaving school that French was relegated to its true place as something charming enough, but not serious; and German engrossed her. She read Goethe's and Schiller's plays with her teacher, and Heine's songs with one of her girl-friends. She laid out a course of reading in German, which was to include Schopen-

hauer's philosophy, already familiar to her through the talk of a premature Harvard man, who rarely talked of anything else. But it never really came to this; German literature presently took the form of drama, and after Helen's participation in a certain number of German plays, it yielded to the pleasing dance of the same name; though not till it had superseded Italian as well as French in her affections. Dante, of course, one must always respect, but after Dante, there was so little in Italian as compared with German! The soft throat from which the southern vowels came so mellow roughed itself with gutturals. But this, like music, was only for a time. In the end, Helen was always a girl of sense. She knew that she was not a German scholar, any more than a great performer, and she would have shrunk with astonished modesty from the notion of putting such acquirements as she had in either to practical use. She hid them away, when her frenzy for them was past, as really so little that one ought to be ashamed of them.

It was the same with painting—or Art, as she then called it—in which it has already been represented that she at one time took a great interest. She really liked it very much; she had that feeling for form and colour without which no dressmaker can enable a young lady to dress exquisitely, and she enjoyed form and colour in painting. But by and by, as the class fanned itself down to the grains of wheat in its large measure of amiable and well-meaning chaff, Helen found that her place was with

the chaff. It did not need the eye of the great painter, glancing with a humorous gleam from her work at her, to teach her this; she had felt it before, and she gave it up before she had conspicuously disgraced herself. She was always very glad to have taken to it; the attempt to paint for herself had cleared and defined her taste in painting, and indefinitely enlarged the bounds of her knowledge and enjoyment. But it had not done anything more, and all that Helen had learnt and done had merely had the effect that was meant: to leave her a cultivated and agreeable girl, with bright ideas on all sorts of pleasant subjects. She was, as the sum of it, merely and entirely a lady, the most charming thing in the world, and as regards anything but a lady's destiny the most helpless.

It was the fact that Helen's life now seemed wrenched and twisted so far from its rightful destiny, which bowed Captain Butler over it in such despair, and which well might strike pity into the hardiest beholder. Her old friend saw no hope for her but in the chance of there being something, as his wife suggested, between her and Robert Fenton. Yet it was against this hope that Helen herself had most strenuously steeled her heart. She had not the least doubt of Robert. He was a gentleman, and he would take what she had written in the right way. She rested in such absolute faith in his generosity, that she shrank from the possibility of abusing it as from something like sacrilege. If Robert were that moment to come and ask her to

marry him, she would not take him till she had fairly won him again; and if, when he had got her letter, and thought it all over, he decided that she was too light and flippant a girl to trust with his happiness, she should know just how to take it. She should not blame him; she should not think him less kind and true; he should be none the less her hero. In fact, it seemed as if his willingness to forget her folly would somehow mar the perfection of her self-sacrifice. So, while she clung the most fondly to the thought of him, it was with the austerest readiness to give him up, and even a sort of impatience. Women seldom reason, it is said; when they do so, it must be owned that it is with passionate largeness. The sum of Helen's emotional logic was that she must plan her future with as much severity and seriousness, as much will to venture and to endure, as if there were no Robert Fenton, or ever had been, in the world. Her sole difficulty was to imagine her future, and to begin to imagine it, she must first escape from the affectionate restraint of these kind friends of hers. She had no purpose more definite than that.

When she went from Mrs. Butler to her own room, the chamber did not seem spacious enough for the tumult in her mind, and now that she had resolved to go up to Boston that afternoon, and was, as it were, already in motion, the inertness of the place was intolerable. She put on a wrap and a hat, and stole out to her accustomed place on the rocks. It was a very still morning late in September, after

the first autumn gales had blown themselves away, and a glistening calm, with a deep heart of mellow warmth, had followed. The sea sparkled and shone with a thousand radiances in its nearer levels, and in its distance was a blue that melted into a hardly more ethereal heaven, a few white sails that might have been wings showing palely at its confluence with the sky. It washed languidly up the little beach of the cove, and with a slow, shouldering action, softly heaved against the foot of the rocks where the sea-weed flung up by the storm hung drying its masses in the sun, and trailing its ribbons in the tide. The air seemed to sparkle and burn like the sea, and was full of the same pungent, saline odours.

Helen came round a knot of twisted cedars that hid her haunt from the house, and, climbing to the perch where she was used to sit, found herself confronted by a gentleman apparently in as great trouble as herself at their encounter. She could not mistake those sloping shoulders, that long neck, and that ineffective chin: it was Lord Rainford, not now in the blue yachting-stuff in which she had last seen him, but in a morning costume which seemed to make even less of him in point of personal attractiveness. Helen held the only pass by which he could have escaped, and, much as she would have liked to let him go, it was impossible for her to yield without speaking.

"Ah—good-morning. I'm intruding here, I'm afraid, Miss—Harkness," he began.

"O no," she said, and paused, not knowing just what else to say.

"The fact is," the Englishman continued, "that I had been calling with Mr. Ray, and he went back a moment, and I stepped down here on the rocks, and—" Helen perceived that he had taken in the fact of her crapes, visiting them with a glance of wistful pity, as if he would like to say something fit and due about her bereavement. But he only asked, after his abrupt pause, "Have you been always well since I saw you?"

She remembered Ray's praises of Lord Rainford, and would have liked to put herself right with him. She hated to have him thinking her flippant and unfeeling, though she might have proved that it was his fault she had been so. But she could think of nothing more than "Thank you" to say; and then she asked, "Have *you* been well?"

"Oh, very!" answered Lord Rainford; "my American summer has quite set me up."

This seemed to imply that he had not been very well when he came, but Helen did not ask. She was thinking that when he should have a heavier moustache and a beard to that feeble chin, his face and neck might be helped off a little, but nothing could ever do anything for those shoulders. She settled this in her mind before she said, rather absently, "I am glad of that. You will be going home soon, I suppose," she added, from mere dearth, though it occurred to her that this might be set down as an instance of the Yankee inquisitiveness that Englishmen are always in quest of.

"Yes; I'm going to sail to-morrow," said Lord Rainford. "Your friends have promised to come and see me in England."

"They told me," assented Helen.

"I'm sure they owe me a revenge in that way," continued the young man. "Mr. Ray has done me no end of kindness. In fact everybody's been most uncommonly kind. I couldn't say enough of it!"

"I'm glad you have enjoyed your stay here," said Helen. "We Americans are rather weak about our country. We like people to like it, and take it as a personal favour when they do. I suppose none of us," she added, "does anything to set even the least important person in it before a stranger in a false light, without feeling sorry." She examined Lord Rainford's face for an instant before she dropped her eyes, and saw it kindle with a delicate intelligence.

"I wish," he answered, "that I could be sure I leave everybody in America as well pleased with me as I am with all America."

"Good-bye," said Helen; "we shall be making international allusions to the language of Shakespeare and Milton in another minute."

"No," said Lord Rainford; "it seems to me you don't care to do that any more. Very curious," he added; "I can't get the people I meet to say a good word for their country. They all seem ashamed of it, and abuse it, no end."

"That's because they want you to praise it," suggested Helen.

"Ah, but they won't let you praise it! They 'll let you join them in crying it down."

"But you had better not."

"Ah, yes; very likely. I can't think that a country where I've met so many nice people, and seen scarcely anything but order and comfort even in these very bad times, can be going to the dogs; but I can't get anybody *here* to agree with me—that is, in society. I don't understand it."

"I can't explain," said Helen, with a little smile, "except by 'the settled opposition to our institutions which pervades the British mind.'"

"Ah, Chuzzlewit; I know. But you 'll excuse my saying that I think your institutions have changed for the worse in this respect since Mr. Pogram's time. I think Pogramism is better than this other thing."

"What other thing?" asked Helen, not a great deal interested.

"Why, this not talking of America at all. I find your people—your best people, I suppose they are—very nice, very intelligent, very pleasant—only talk about Europe. They talk about London, and about Paris, and about Rome; there seems to be quite a passion for Italy; but they don't seem interested in their own country. I can't make it out. It isn't as if they were cosmopolitan; that isn't quite the impression, though—excuse my saying so—they try to give it. They always seem to have been reading the *Fortnightly* and the *Saturday Review*, and the *Spectator*, and the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and the last French and English books. It 's very odd! Upon my word,

at one dinner the Americans got to talking to one another about some question of local finance in pounds, shillings, and pence. I don't understand it."

Lord Rainford seemed to find nothing ridiculous, but only something mysterious in this, and reddened a little when Helen laughed.

"Perhaps you're embittered because experience has destroyed your ideal. You expected us all to call you a Britisher, and to flaunt Bunker Hill Monument in your face."

"Ah, now, do you think that's quite fair, Miss Harkness?"

Helen stooped a little sidewise and felt about her skirts with her left hand for the loop of her train, in that peculiar clawing and grappling manner which once had its fascination for the idle spectator. "We American women are accused of not caring anything about our institutions," she said. She secured the loop now, and, erecting herself, gave Lord Rainford her right hand for good-bye.

A deeper red dyed the young man's face, as he took her hand and detained it a moment. "Are you going," he asked, and hesitated before he added, with an abrupt change of tone: "I can't let you go, Miss Harkness, without saying—without saying—without trying to say how very sorry I have felt at—at—your bereavement. It came so soon after I first saw you that—that I—thought you—thought myself not altogether wrong to tell you. But, I suppose, I shouldn't have spoken. I beg your pardon!"

"You are very, very kind, Lord Rainford," answered Helen steadily, "and I thank you for speaking of it. I know people usually avoid speaking to others in—mourning—about it to spare them; but it 's better to recognise it; I like it better than trying to ignore it."

"I 've always felt," pursued Lord Rainford, "that I was painfully associated in your mind—I mean—I don't know—I hope you won't always think of me as a particularly disagreeable part of that day's experience." Lord Rainford still spoke with an awkward halt and hesitation, but the genuine feeling with which he seemed eager to leave Helen a better impression dignified his manner. "If you won't think it egotistical," he hastened to add, "I 'll say that I believe I 'm rather a serious man; at least I 'm a heavy one; and when I attempt anything else, I—I know I 'm disgusting—more disgusting than ordinarily. I was shocked—I can't tell you how much I was shocked—to think I had followed you up almost to the moment of that—intelligence, with imbecilities that must have been a—in distressing contrast. I don't know whether I make myself clear—whether I ought to speak—"

"O yes!" cried Helen, touched at his assumption of all the blame. "I 'm so glad you have spoken of that, if only for the selfish reason that it gives me a chance to say how ashamed I am of my own part in it. I never thought of yours"—this was not quite true, but we cannot be very generous and quite true at the same time—"but it was the thought o

my own frivolity that sometimes helped to make what followed so hard to bear. I was very rude."

"O no, no!" answered the young man. "You said nothing but what I richly deserved. If you'd only said more, I should have liked it much better —afterwards. But what I want you to think is, that I shouldn't have done so badly, perhaps, if I'd been acting quite naturally, or in my own character. That is—"

"I'm afraid," said Helen, "that I can't ask you to think that I was acting out of *my* character—or *all* of my characters: I seem to have so many—"

"Yes," interrupted Lord Rainford, "that's what I meant."

"It seems to me that it was only too much like one of mine—the one I'm most ashamed of. You will have a pleasant time to cross, Lord Rainford," she added, and took away her hand.

"Well, I don't know," said the other, accepting the close of this passage of their interview, and answering from the conscientiousness in talk which serves the English so well instead of conventional politeness, and is not so pleasant, "there are apt to be gales at this season, you know."

"O yes, yes!" returned Helen, a little vexed at herself. "Gales, yes. But I was thinking of the equinoctial storm being past. They say it's past now."

"I'm a good sailor," said Lord Rainford. "I think I shall take a run over again, next year."

"You've not got enough of America in three months!"

"No. I hope it hasn't got too much of me." He looked at Helen as if he expected her to say something civil on the part of her hemisphere. But she refused to be the national voice, except very evasively.

"Oh, we ought to be flattered that people care to come back."

"You know," said Lord Rainford, "that I've seen almost nothing of the country yet. I've not even been in Washington, and I want to see Chicago and San Francisco." Helen did not say that she could not understand why, and Lord Rainford went on. "I'd only a few weeks in Canada, you know, before I came down to Orchard Beach—I think they call it—with some Montreal people, and then I came to Boston, and I've been about Boston and Newport ever since. People have been extraordinarily kind. I couldn't really get away, and as I'm going away rather prematurely now, I must come back."

From this outline of his experience, Helen knew quite accurately all its details. She could have told just what had happened to him at Newport, going thither with Boston introductions, what lawn-parties, lunches, and dinners had been made for him, and in whose carriage he had first driven to the polo grounds. He had been perhaps once at the Town and Country Club; and he had been a good deal at the bathing-beaches, although early assured that nobody bathed there any more, and the Manhattan Yacht Club had sailed him over all the neigh-

bouring waters. He had seen the decay of the custom of Fort Day, and had been told what numbers of people used to go to the music in Fort Adams before polo began. When he returned to Boston, it was too soon for society to have come back in full force, but enough of it had got back to show him with what intensity of hospitality the sojourning Englishman, distinguished by rank, or otherwise, or simply well accredited, is used among us. Helen knew, without asking, the houses and their succession, in which Lord Rainford had been entertained, and she could have guessed pretty well at what semi-civic feasts he had assisted. The Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday Evening Clubs had all shared in him, and he had listened to part of a lecture at the Woman's Club. He had been taught much more about the charitable, penal, and educational establishments of Boston, than any one Bostonian could endure to know, and he had kept his original impression that Boston reminded you of an English town. If he was at all astonished, as a young man, at the attentions heaped upon him, he must, as a Lord, have been too much used to consideration in his own country, to be surprised at it in ours. Men vastly his superiors in everything but birth liked to speak casually of him as that very nice young Englishman, who had dined with them, and to let the fact of his rank rather patronisingly escape them in talk. People whose secret pride and dearest prejudices he had unwittingly trodden into pulp in

his plump expressions of crude opinion, professed rather to like his frankness. They said that there was something in his bearing—a simplicity, a directness, an unconsciousness—which showed the advantage of a standard of manners. The fact that you might often think him, at first glance, the most plebeian-looking person in company, showed his extraordinary qualities of race; the persistence, through so many hundred years, of the ancestral traits, which, in the attrition of a democratic society like our own must have been obliterated long ago, was held to be a peculiar triumph of aristocratic civilisation. One accomplished gentleman had proved himself much better versed in the Rainford pedigree than Lord Rainford himself. "Talked to me about my great-grandmother," said the nobleman afterwards to Ray, "and my maiden step-aunts."

"Good-bye," said Helen once more, and nodding, she turned away, and went down the rocks.

Lord Rainford bowed, and said good-bye, too, following her with his eyes, but not otherwise pursuing her.

"You 're back soon," he said to Mr. Ray, when the latter presently joined him.

At Salem that afternoon he came into the car where Helen sat. The place beside her was the only vacant one, and he stood leaning against the seat while he explained that he had been left by his train at that station in the morning. He looked as if he would like to be asked to take the vacant seat,

Helen thought; but she was perturbed and preoccupied, she could not endure the thought of talking all the way to Boston, and she made no sign of invitation. She was sorry, but she could not help it. He hesitated an instant, and bidding her good-bye once more, said he was going forward into the smoking-car, and she did not see him again.

She went first to the post-office, where she had never been before, and which was so vast, and looked so hurried and careless with those throngs of people sweeping through its corridors, that she began to question whether it could be safely intrusted with a letter for Robert. Through one of the windows opening in the long façade of glass above the stretch of brass drawers, which people were unlocking and locking up, all about, she saw a weary-looking clerk toss a little package into the air for relaxation, and then throw it into a distant corner, and she thought with a shudder, what if that had been her letter, and it had slipped under something and been lost! Besides, now that she had come to the post-office, she did not know in which of the many letter-holes to trust, and she studied the neighbouring inscriptions without being able to make up her mind. At last she asked an old gentleman, who was unlocking his box, and he showed her; she feigned to drop her letter according to his instructions, but waited till he went away, and then asked the clerk at the nearest window. He confirmed the statement of the old gentleman, and Helen had almost allowed her letter to go when she bethought herself to say to the

clerk that it was to the care of the Navy Department. He smiled—sarcastically, Helen fancied—and said it was quite the same thing. Then she dedicated a final blush to the act, and posted her letter, and found herself quite at a distance from the post-office, walking giddily along, with a fluttering heart full of delicious shame. She was horrified to think she had done it, and so glad it was done.

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VIII.

THE walk from the post-office to West Pomegranate Street is not very short, but Helen was at the Miss Amys' door before she knew. The elder Miss Amy came herself to answer the bell. She recognised Helen presently through her veil, and welcomed her with a decayed-gentlewoman-politeness, explaining that she and her sister kept no servant when their lodgers were out of town. Helen had begun to say, after the preliminary parley about health and the weather, that she had come to see if she could take board with them, when the younger Miss Amy came in. She shook her head in response to the elder Miss Amy's reference of the matter to her, and said she was sorry, but it was a mistake: they only let their rooms furnished now, and people must find table-board at some of the neighbouring houses. At Helen's look of disappointment, she said she knew it was very disagreeable going out to meals; but their lodgers were nearly always gentlemen, and they did not mind it.

"Is the lady who wishes the rooms a young person?" asked Miss Amy.

Helen saw that they thought she was looking up a

place for some one else, and that they were far from imagining her errand to be on her own behalf. They saw in her an amiable young lady, interesting herself for some one who was out of town perhaps, and wished to come in for the winter. It cost Helen more to set them right than she could have believed; the first steps downward in the world are not so painful from the surprise of your equals as from that of people on the level to which you descend.

"It's for myself that I want the rooms," said Helen, and both the Miss Amys said "Oh!" and then were silent, till Helen asked if they could recommend her to some good place where she could find both board and lodging under the same roof. The Miss Amys thought a while. All the neighbouring places were very large boarding-houses, and the company very promiscuous. "I don't think you would like it, Miss Harkness," said the younger Miss Amy.

"I'm afraid it isn't a question of what I shall like, any more," said Helen bravely. "It's necessary that I should economise, and if I can get a room there cheaply, I must not be fastidious."

"Oh!" said the younger Miss Amy a little more expressively than before.

"Still," continued the young girl, "I *should* like it better if I could find some place where there were not *many* other boarders."

The elder Miss Amy looked at the younger with a blankness for which the glare of her spectacles was mainly responsible, and asked, "How would Mrs. Hewitt's do?"

"Mrs. Hewitt's might do," assented the younger sister. "Her rooms are good, and the Smileys liked her table. But Miss Harkness would find it very different from what she's been used to." She seemed to add this caution with a certain indefinable insinuation, that the change might be a useful lesson.

"Oh, no doubt," said Helen, "but I shall not mind, if—"

"It's quite a proper place in every way," continued the younger Miss Amy, "and the neighbourhood unexceptionable. If you can get the use of the parlour to see your friends in, it would be desirable."

"You won't keep *all* your acquaintance," she added, "but some will remain true. *We* retained all that we wished."

"Yes," said Helen drily, not choosing that Miss Amy should assume their equality in that fashion. The Miss Amys had, in fact, declined to their present station from no great social eminence, but the former position had been growing in distinction ever since they lost it, and they had so long been spoken of as "such gentlewomen," that they had come to look back upon it as something quite commanding; and there was a note of warning for Helen in the younger Miss Amy's remark, as if all persons must not expect to be so fortunate as they. "I should like," said the young girl with some stateliness, "very much to see Mrs. Hewitt. Will you give me her address?"

"I will write it on one of our cards," said Miss Amy, who found with difficulty, in a portable writing-desk on the table, a card inscribed with *The Misses Amy* in the neat pencilling of a professional card-writer. The reception-room of these ladies was respectable in threadbare brussels, and green reps; a fire of English cannel coal, in the grate, seemed to have been a long time laid, and the lumps of coal would have been the better for dusting. The house was clean, but it had the dusty smell, which small city houses have at the end of summer before their furnace fires are lit, and Helen had found the Miss Amys not such nice Miss Amys as she had thought them in former days, when she had come to their house to call upon some friends there. When the card was inscribed with Mrs. Hewitt's address, she rose to receive it.

She felt strangely depressed, and the tears came into her eyes as she pulled down her veil and hurried away. She had packed a bag before leaving Beverley, with the purpose of not going back that night, for she had not thought but that she should go at once to the Miss Amys, and had resisted all entreaties that she would return and tell the Butlers about it. She would not have gone to the Miss Amys now on any account, and yet she felt somehow hurt at not finding their house open to her in the way she had imagined. She had a cowardly satisfaction in thinking that she could easily get the six o'clock train to Beverley after she had seen Mrs. Hewitt.

Like the elder Miss Amy, that lady answered her door in person when Helen rang, and taking the card, with the explanation that Helen gave her, led the way to her reception room. It took shape from the swell-front; and the rocking-chair, into which Mrs. Hewitt sank, stood between the two windows, by which she could easily command the life without, up street and down. What had been the fireplace was occupied by a register; over the mantel hung the faded photograph of an officer in uniform; in the corner was a whatnot, with shells and daguerreotypes in cases, and baskets of sewing on its successive shelves; against the wall, opposite the windows, stood a sewing-machine; the carpet was a tapestry of moss pattern in green colour; the window shades had a band of gilt around their edges, relieved in green, and the reps of the sofa and chairs were green. Simple and few as these appointments were, they had an unreconciled look, as if they had not been bought to match, but were fortuitous combinations on which some one else had lost money.

Mrs. Hewitt asked her to sit down, but Helen remained standing, and said that she was a little pressed for time, and must ask at once if she could have a room with board.

"I don't know as I've got anything 'twould suit you, but we can look," said Mrs. Hewitt, apparently disappointed in not being first allowed to talk it all over. "Did you want something *on suit*, or singly?" she asked.

"I don't know what you mean," said Helen.

"Do you want more than one room?"

"O no! I only want one."

The landlady preceded Helen up the stripe of linen that covered half the narrow carpeting on the cramped staircase. "Parlour," she announced on arriving at the first landing, as she threw open the door of a large room furnished in much-worn brown plush. "Goes with the rooms on this floor; I always let 'em *on suit*. Now, if you wanted anything *on suit*—"

"I only want one room, and I don't care for a private parlour," said Helen.

The landlady glanced up the next flight of stairs. "That whole floor is let to one family—lady and gentleman and little boy—and then there's only a room on the top floor besides," said Mrs. Hewitt.

"I'll look at it, please," said Helen, and followed the landlady up. The room had a pretty bed and bureau; it was very neat, and it was rather spacious. "Is there any one else on this floor?" asked Helen, feeling sure that the cook and second-girl must be her neighbours.

The landlady pushed open the door across the little passage-way. "There's an art-student in this room," she said.

"Art-student?" gasped Helen.

"Young lady from Nashua," said the landlady.

"Oh!" cried Helen, remembering with relief that art-students in our time and country are quite as apt to be of one sex as another, and thinking with a smile that she had been surprised not to smell tobacco as

soon as Mrs. Hewitt had said "art-student." She reflected that she had once been an art-student herself, and wondered what the sketches of the young lady from Nashua were like. "What would be the price of this room?"

The landlady leaned against the side of the bed. "Seven dollars," she said in an experimental tone. "I used to get my ten and twelve dollars for it, right after the war."

"I will take it," said Helen, who found it much less than she feared. "And I should like to come at once."

"To-night?" asked the landlady, looking at Helen.

"Yes, if the room 's ready."

"Oh, the room 's *ready*. But—did you bring a trunk?"

"I forgot! It 's at the station. I can send for it."

"O yes, the express is right round the corner from here. You just give 'em your check. But you better not lose any time. They 're late sometimes, any way."

"Very well," said Helen, childishly pleased at having transacted the business so successfully. "I will take the room from to-day, and I will pay you for the first week now."

"Just as you please," said Mrs. Hewitt.

Helen drew out her porte-monnaie, and said, "The Miss Amys can tell you about me."

"Oh, that's all right," answered Mrs. Hewitt, politely. She had perhaps been perplexed to know how she should hint anything about references to

this young lady who took an attic room with such a high and mighty air. "Their card was sufficient."

When Helen came back from her errand to the express office, and went to her room, she laid aside her things and made herself at home in it. She did not know in the least what her life was to be there; but she felt that this, whatever it was not, was escape and independence, and beginning. A rapid calculation had shown her that her payment of seven dollars a week would not encroach much upon her capital, and somehow she would earn enough money to meet her other expenses. She could not sit still; she rose and opened her closet and found it deep and convenient; she pulled out the bureau drawers, and they were very sweet and clean. She discovered a little cupboard with shelves where she thought she would put her books. The room was very complete; there was even a hook in the ceiling by the window where some one must have hung a bird-cage. Helen was happy, without accusing herself, for the first time since her father died. She smiled to herself at her landlady's queerness, and was glad, as young people are, to be housed along with a character. She wondered how the art-student looked, and who the family could be. At the sound of the tea-bell she felt the emotion of a healthful hunger.

There was a dish of cream toast, very hot and fragrant; hotter, and more fragrant still, there was a dish of oysters, delicately stewed and flavoured; in a plated basket in the centre of the table was a generous stack of freshly sliced lady-cake. "From

Copeland's," Mrs. Hewitt explained, when she passed it. "Mr. and Mrs. Evans are out to tea, and I thought we wouldn't wait for Miss Root. She 's late sometimes. Did you like your oysters?"

"Delicious!" said Helen.

"Yes, I think there 's nothing like a drop—not *more* than a drop—of sherry in your stew, just when it comes *to* the stew. I don't believe in any thickenin' myself; but if you *must* have it, let it be cracker crumbs: flour makes it so kind of slippy." Mrs. Hewitt went on to enlarge upon many different kinds of dishes, and then from whatever obscure association of ideas, she said: "When you first came in to-day, before I fairly looked at the Miss Amys' card, I thought you 'd been buryin' a husband. I don't see how I could took you if you had. Widows are more *trouble* in a house! Boston family?"

"*What?*" cried Helen.

"Your folks Boston people?"

"O yes," replied the girl, and she submitted with what grace she could to the inquisition into her past that followed. "I've never lived anywhere else;" and nothing seemed stranger than this when she came to think it over in her room. Here in the heart of Boston, she was as remote from the Boston she had always known as if it were a thousand miles away; from herself of the time when she lived in that far-off Boston she seemed divided by centuries. Into what a strange and undreamt-of world she had fallen! She did not dislike it. On the contrary, she thought she should be rather content in it.

Without definite aims as yet for the future, she fancied that she should try to be wholly of her present world, and ignore that in which she used to live. Already she felt alien to it so far as to wish that the Butlers would not send people to call on her, nor come much themselves. She knew that she could adapt herself to her circumstances, but she dreaded the pain of their inability to realise her in them, and felt that their unhappiness about her would be more than she could bear. She planned a geographical limit within which she could live a long time and not meet any one whom she had known, and she resolved next day to begin her exploration of her solitude. The dark gathered into the room, and the window showed a black frame against the sky before she thought of lighting her gas. She was shaking her match out, as women do, when a light tap at her door standing ajar startled her, and then the door was pushed open, and the figure of a tall girl stood on the threshold. "Miss Root: Miss Harkness, I believe," said the figure. "Will you lend me a match, please? I waited for you to light your gas so as to be sure you had matches before I bothered you. It's such a long journey down-stairs."

Helen smiled in her most radiant way, and got the matches, saying as she held them forward, "Won't you come in, please?"

"No, I thank you," said Miss Root, taking one match only. "I begin badly. But you won't find me a great borrower. Have you got everything you want in your room?"

"Yes, everything, I believe," said Helen, sweeping it with a comprehensive glance.

"You 'll find Mrs. Hewitt pretty prompt. You won't have anything to complain of, unless you mind being talked to death. Good-night," and drawing the door to after her, Miss Root returned to her own room.

Before she slept, Helen heard the street door open and shut, and then voices ascending to the third floor: a lady's voice, and a gentleman's voice, and a sleepy little boy's voice.

"Well, this is the *last* time we shall take Tom to the theatre," said the lady's voice—the voice of spent nerves.

"Yes," said the gentleman's voice. "We shall confine ourselves to the circus after this, Tom."

"Circuses are the best, any way," said the child's voice.

"Hush! Don't speak so!" cried the lady.

"Why, they are, mamma," insisted the boy.

"This is a question of morals, not of opinions, Tom," said the father. "You 're not to prefer circuses when they 're inflicted as a punishment."

They had now reached their door, as it appeared, for a light flashed into the hall below as from gas turned up.

The lady's voice was heard again: "His forehead 's burning hot! If that child should have a fever—Here, feel his forehead!"

"Forehead 's all right!" responded the heavier voice.

"*I* shall give him three of aconite!" cried the lady.

"Give him three thousand, but put him to bed," assented the gentleman.

"*Will* you shut the door?" implored the lady. "Waking the whole house!"

"I haven't refused, my dear," said the gentleman. "Why do you always—"

The door closed, expressively, and not, as Helen fancied, by the gentleman's hand. "The Evanses," she inferred. She fell asleep wondering if she could indeed be the same girl who had talked that morning to Lord Rainford on the rocks at Beverley.

IX.

HELEN saw the Evanses in going to breakfast. They came down-stairs just after her, Mr. Evans leading his boy by his extended forefinger, and Mrs. Evans coming behind, and twitching something about the child's dress into place, as mothers do.

"Mrs. Hewitt," said Mr. Evans, as they sat down at table, "I have been some time in your house, but you must have older friends than I, and I don't understand why the law has honoured me as it has."

"I'm sure *I* don't know what you're talkin' about," said Mrs. Hewitt, pouring the coffee.

"Well, I don't, myself," returned Mr. Evans, "and I thought I would get you to explain. You don't find yourself unusually infirm of mind, do you?"

"No, I don't," replied Mrs. Hewitt candidly.

"And you haven't experienced anything like a return of extreme youth?"

"What *is* the man after?" cried Mrs. Hewitt.

"Then why should you be taken care of in any special manner, and why should I, of all people, be called upon to take care of you? Here's a paper," Mr. Evans continued, taking a document from his

pocket, "that I found slipped under my door this morning. It makes a personal appeal to me, in the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to to become your trustee. Of course, it 's very flattering and all that, but I 'd much rather not. You must allow me to resign, Mrs. Hewitt. I never did understand business very well, and—"

"How 'd they ever get into this house without my knowing it? That 's what *I* should like to find out!" said Mrs. Hewitt, gazing absently at the paper which Mr. Evans had given her.

"What does it mean?" he asked.

"Pshaw!" cried his landlady. "You don't say you never was *trusteed* before? And boarded round as much as you have!"

"Trusteed! Is it so common a thing as to have a participial form? Then I needn't have any scruples about resigning?"

Mrs. Hewitt broke into a laugh. "Resigning! Bless you, you *can't* resign. There 's no such thing."

"Gracious powers! Not resign an office for which I don't feel myself competent—"

"Oh, come, now! you know very well what it is. It 's them curtains," said Mrs. Hewitt, pointing to the green-and-gold-trimmed shades.

Mr. Evans rose and curiously examined the shades; his boy also slipped down out of his chair, and joined in the inspection.

"Thomas, who gave you leave to quit the table? Come back!" cried Mrs. Evans.

"My dear!" expostulated her husband, "the child

very naturally wishes to see what sort of window-shade it is that thrusts an irresignable office of honour and profit upon his father. Look carefully, Tom. Regard the peculiarity of the texture; the uncommon tone of the colours."

"Oh, pshaw, Mr. Evans! You stop!" exclaimed Mrs. Hewitt. "When they sent in their bill, I told 'em 'twas too much, and I shouldn't pay it. I *didn't* believe they 'd really go so far as to trustee me."

"But what *does* it mean, Mrs. Hewitt?" asked Mrs. Evans. "I don't believe Mr. Evans knows any more than the rest of us."

"Why, Mrs. Evans, it means just this: that your husband isn't to pay me any board till this bill is settled, and if he does, he 's liable for it himself. I presume they 'll be trusteein' all of you. I shall have to pay it now."

"Is that the law?" demanded Mrs. Evans. "It makes one long for a delinquent debtor of one's own. So simple, yet so effective."

"Well, you have it to say," said Mrs. Hewitt, surprisingly little ruffled by the incident, "that you never was trusteed in *my* house before."

"I certainly have that to say," admitted Mr. Evans. "I 'm sorry on your account that I can't resign my trusteeship, and I 'm sorry on my own that it 's such a very sordid affair. I never happened to be appointed to office before, and I was feeling rather proud of the confidence reposed in me."

They all rose from the table together, and Helen

went up-stairs with the Evanses. She and Mrs. Evans exchanged a few words on the way, and stopped on the first landing to glance into the large parlour. Mr. Evans came after, bestriding his boy, who now had hold of both his forefingers—like a walking Colossus of Rhodes. He flung open the parlour door, which stood ajar, in Mrs. Hewitt's manner. "Goes with the rooms on this floor; I always let 'em *on suit;* now, if you wanted anything *on suit*—" He looked Helen for sympathy, and she laughed.

"Yes, I know," she said.

"Mrs. Hewitt won't like your joking her so much," said his wife.

"She won't know it, if I do it behind her back. And she seems to enjoy it to her face."

"Do you think she liked your coming out about that trusteeing?"

"She didn't mind it. But I have it on my conscience to tell Miss Harkness that Mrs. Hewitt is, for all I know, a very just person—and that I 'm surprised she let those shade-people get the advantage of her. She has a passion, like all landladies, for single gentlemen. She idealises them, I am afraid. There haven't been any single gentlemen in the house since we came here, two years ago. We sometimes fancy that her preference is founded upon her experience of Mr. Hewitt as a married gentleman, which was probably unpleasant."

"Is—is she a widow?" Helen ventured to Mrs. Evans.

"Why, not exactly," said Mrs. Evans.

"It's a very neat way of putting it," said Mr. Evans. "She's a widow, Miss Harkness, of the herbaceous variety."

"My dear, she'll *hear* you," cried Mrs. Evans.

"Very well, then, she won't understand me. I'll venture to say Miss Harkness doesn't."

"No, I don't," said Helen, and looked at Mrs. Evans for light.

"Her husband is living, I believe," explained Mrs. Evans, "but—absent."

Mr. Evans laughed again. "Not lost, but gone before. Come, Tom! We must go to work!" He led the way up to the next floor, and at her door Mrs. Evans asked Helen if she would not come in.

Helen had a curiosity, which she thought harmless, to see their apartment, and she accepted the invitation in the drifting, indecisive manner which ladies have when they do not mean to commit themselves to the consequences of a self-indulgence. She did not feel quite sure of these people; she had a strong impression that she was their social superior, but thrown with them as she was, she had too much good sense to hold stiffly aloof from them. She sat down without, as it were, acknowledging that she sat down; and she followed Mrs. Evans about from room to room without seeming to do so, as well as she could manage that difficult effect. It was a very pretty little apartment of four tiny rooms, of which the last was Mr. Evans's study: this was just large enough to admit his desk and chairs, and was packed with books on shelves to the ceiling, and

Helen inferred that he was some sort of literary man. She would not sit down again, but paid a frosty little net-work of compliments to the souvenirs of travel that she saw upon the tables and walls; she praised the balcony on which one of the windows opened, and she smiled upon the flowers with which Mrs. Evans had filled it. In fine she guarded her distance with the skill that had kept the acquaintance at a stand-still, and yet left it resumable on more cordial terms at will. One is of one's world after all; and even in resigning her world, as she thought she had done, Helen had not yet made up her mind to be of a lower one.

She had promised to go down to Beverley on the morrow, and tell her friends what she had done, as the condition of their letting her come up to Boston at all on that wild enterprise of hers; and though she would have been glad not to go, she kept her word. But it was really not so hard meeting them as she had feared. Mrs. Butler was forbearing, and Marian was preoccupied; the younger girls saw it somewhat as Helen did, and thought it an enviable adventure. She told them all that had happened in detail, and made them laugh. She partly dramatised her interview with the Miss Amys, and they said it was perfectly delightful to think of *Helen* being patronised by such people. They wanted to see Mrs. Hewitt, and the fellow-boarders; they wished that somebody would trustee their mother; they said that the life Helen was leading was fascinating.

"Perhaps you wouldn't find it so fascinating if you were obliged to lead it," said Mrs. Butler.

"Helen leads it, and she finds it fascinating."

"Helen leads it out of the hardness of her heart, because her friends don't wish her to," returned Mrs. Butler fondly.

"Mrs. Butler! Remember your promise!" said Helen.

"I hope you'll remember yours, my dear,—to come back to us."

"Oh! And what are you going to do, Helen? What are you going to do for a living?" demanded Jessie Butler.

"Jessie!" cried her mother. "Don't be absurd! Do for a living!"

"I hope you won't think it absurd, Mrs. Butler," said Helen, with serious dignity, "for I really want to do something for a living."

"Poor child!" said Mrs. Butler, getting Helen's hand between hers, and tenderly smoothing it. "What could you do?"

"I don't know what yet. But I know I could do something." She felt dispirited by Mrs. Butler's motherly kindness, and would have liked to take her hand away. This was what she had dreaded, this feeling on the part of such friends as the Butlers that anything useful and practical was impossible to her. For the moment this feeling seemed all that stood between her and a prosperous career of self-help; it unnerved her so terribly

"Do tell us what you've been thinking of trying,"

persisted Jessie. She was the youngest, and she ventured on almost as great freedoms with her mother and Helen as Marian herself did.

"Oh, I thought over a great many things as I came down this morning," answered Helen. "But I haven't settled upon anything yet. Indeed, indeed, Mrs. Butler!" she exclaimed, "I'm very much in earnest about it, and *don't* try to discourage me, please!"

"I won't, dear!" Mrs. Butler assented soothingly, as if Helen were a sick child, and must be humoured in her little fancies.

"How would plain sewing do?" suggested Jessie. "Or, Wanted by a young lady, to have the care of small children, where she would be received as one of the family; no objection to the country; wages not so much of an object as permanent home, address H. H., Transcript Office?"

They laughed at this, Helen forlornly and helplessly with the rest. They could not realise her ambition, and they did not believe in her necessity: Mrs. Butler because she felt that all Helen need really do was to go to Europe with her, and return to marry Robert Fenton as soon as he could get leave to come home; the young girls because they had no experience of life, and could not imagine Helen's case. They were merry about her projects all through lunch, and Helen herself felt that she was behaving very ridiculously in pretending to be anything but the well-taken-care-of young lady that she had always been. The world which she had

touched yesterday became as unreal in its turn as it had made her old life seem.

"I will tell you," said Marian, who had given the subject less attention than the rest, and had laughed at Helen with half her mind all the while on her approaching marriage; "I will tell you. In these days Helen must take to some form of keramics. I wonder that we didn't think of it before. How could we discuss this subject in Beverley, of all places, and not think of pottery? Helen must decorate pottery for a living."

"O yes! and she can drive over to the pottery this afternoon with us, and select the shapes!" clamoured the younger sisters.

Their noise submerged Mrs. Butler's rebukes; there was open rebellion to her voice.

"Mamma!" cried Jessie, "you needn't *try* to put us down about this. It's an extraordinary case! We've never had the opportunity before, to decide the vocation of a young lady who wants a lucrative employment. *Do* say you'll decorate pottery for a living, Helen!"

"Do! do!" pleaded all the rest. They had left their places and gathered round her in postures of supplication.

Helen was swept along in the tide. "I don't know anything about keramics," she laughed, turning upon the group.

"That's the beauty of the profession," they shouted in reply. "You don't *need* to know anything about it."

"I can't draw!"

"Drawing's the very last thing that's wanted for art-pottery. *Say* that you'll drive over with us and select the shapes!"

"You must first begin with a bean-pot, like that pretty little Mrs. Gay," said Jessie Butler. "You ought to have heard her talk about it: so colonial, so in character with Beverley!" The young girl gave the tone and the languish. "She decorated it with a flowering bean; they say she thought that was the kind they baked. Perhaps you'll find that they've begun to give bean-pots an æsthetic shape. Miss Harkness's bean-pots will become the fashion. We shall have a course of beans in their native earthenware, at dinners, and when the pot comes in, everybody will put on their *pince-nez*, and crane over, and ask, 'Is that a Harkness, Mrs. Jones?'"

"No, no! I can't go with you!" cried Helen; "I'm going back to Boston this afternoon."

They all protested, but Helen stood firm, feeling that it was her one chance for life, or for making a living. If she was ever to put in force her resolutions to be something and to do something, she could not get away too soon from an atmosphere in which no one, not even herself, could regard them seriously. It was a trying ordeal, this pity of Mrs. Butler's, and this jocose incredulity of the young girls; yet as Helen rode back to town, she was more and more satisfied that there was something possible and practical in Marian's suggestion. She recalled some pretty shapes of pottery which she had seen

in a shop-window, and which seemed to her more stupidly decorated than anything she could do if she did her worst. They were there on sale, and somebody had been paid for doing them, or expected to be paid for it. The conclusion from the premises was irresistible, and Helen found herself impatient to arrive and begin work. She could really draw very prettily, though she had denied her gift; she was even a clever copyist; but she knew that she lacked the imaginative impulse, and she had not cared for what she could do, because so many others could do it as well.

As soon as she left the train she hastened to this shop, where, besides the decorated pots and vases, she had seen a good many uncontaminated examples of the Beverley ware. She was vexed to find the place already closed, and she could hardly wait for the morning.

She hurried from her breakfast to the shop in the morning; when her purchase came home, and she unpacked it on her bed (the largest and safest surface in her room), she cowered a little to see it so great in quantity. She blushed to find herself making such an ambitious beginning, and though five dollars had seemed a great deal to spend, she wished for the moment that it had not bought quite so much. But this was foolish; of course she must spoil some of the designs, and since she was going to try a variety of decorations, she should want a variety of jars. She set them all on the shelf of her closet, which she locked; she folded up the wrapping-paper and

tucked it away; she even concealed the string; and after putting on her hat and veil for the street, she had to sit down and have a paroxysm of guilty consciousness before she could summon courage to go out on her next errand.

She was going to a shop where they sold artists' materials, to get her colours, and to pick up any hints they could give her there about her work. They were not personally very well informed, but they sold her several little books which had keramic designs in them, and which would tell her all she wished to know. After she had bought them, she thought them rather poverty-stricken in their patterns, and as she passed a print-shop window she saw that pretty series of engravings, illustrative of the old fable of the storks and the babies; and the keramic fitness of storks at once struck her. The prints were rather expensive, and Helen thought that she could not get on without the whole set. Then, as the matter developed in her mind, a great idea occurred to her: Flaxman's illustrations of Homer. They were of course the only things to copy in the classic shapes. The book cost more than she supposed it would, but as she meant to stop with that, she believed she might afford it, and at any rate she bought it. She was afraid to look the whole sum in the face at first, but her hopes rose with her rapid walk homeward, and she finally confronted the fifteen dollars with serene courage.

The next three weeks were given to very ardent if not very diligent labour. Helen had an insuper-

able shyness about her enterprise; she managed so that she might put everything out of sight at a moment's warning, if any one came to her room.

Before actually beginning upon the vases, Helen schooled herself in reproducing on paper the designs she meant to use, and this took time. She was also interrupted by excursions to Beverley; but she did not count this as loss altogether, for she was able to make several studies in colour of the low blackberry vine, now in its richest autumnal bronze, and of certain sea-weeds, with which she meant to decorate several pieces. She did three with storks, and had a fourth half-done when she let it fall. She wrapped the fragments in paper, and took them out at twilight, and dropped them in the street some distance away, that the pieces might not be traced to her, and so proceeded to the Flaxmans. She chose three subjects among these: The old nurse Euryclea recognising Ulysses as she bathes his feet; Penelope carrying the bow of Ulysses to the Suitors; and the meeting of Ulysses and Penelope. These all related to the return of the wanderer, and they went very prettily round the vases. Ulysses following the homeward car of Nausicaa from the coast on which she found him shipwrecked, was a subject which Helen instinctively rejected, though the lines were lovely, and she felt that she could do it easily. The jar which she decorated with the seaweed had a band of shells round the middle; a slanting flight of birds encircled the vases, over which she taught the blackberry vine to wanton.

She had many alternating moods of exaltation and despair while upon this work, but when it was all done, and the pots set out in a fair row on her window-shelf, and she retired a pace or two with her pencil at her lip to get their entire effect, she could not but own that they seemed very successful. At that distance certain defects of drawing—such as that which gave Penelope bearing the bow rather a pert and mincing look—and other blemishes were subdued, but even when taken up severally and scrutinised merely at arm's length, the vases bore the ordeal of critical inspection very well. "And no one," thought Helen, "will ever look at them more severely than I have."

She sank into her chair, which she drew up in front of her work, and indulged a long reverie. In this she dramatised her appearance at one of those charming shops where they deal in such things; she set little scenes in which the proprietors called one another up to look at her vases; and she dialogued their compliments and her own evasive acceptance of them. They ended by asking very respectfully if she could not be persuaded to employ a part of her leisure in doing something of the kind for them; and on her replying that these were for sale, they had instantly offered her a price for them that passed her wildest hopes; that seemed so much too much, indeed, that she insisted upon abating something from it. Struck by this nobleness in her, they had conversed in low tones together; and then the senior member of the firm had confessed that they had

some hesitation in asking her to design certain friezes which they were to do for a cottage at Newport, and their admiration for her work must be their excuse if they were proposing something quite out of the way; but they begged her to remember that two ladies in London had taken up decorative architecture as a profession, and they trusted they were not wrong. Then Helen had replied, O no, indeed! She was only too much flattered by their confidence in her, and she would be very glad to think it over; all that she feared was that she would not be able to meet their expectation; at which they had laughed, and said *they* had no such fear, and had drawn her a check for her vases, and had added a few hundreds as a sort of retainer in the matter of the friezes. At this point Helen broke from her reveries with "What silly, silly nonsense! What a simpleton I am!"

While she was in good humour with them, she resolved to pack her vases in the basket that she had got for that purpose, and when each was carefully wrapped, and put in, she laughed to find the basket looking like that of an old Jew who used to come to the kitchen door to sell Bohemian glass, when she was a child. The matter of transportation was one that she did not consider till the next morning, when it flashed upon her that she could not go carrying that basket about. She must drive, and though this did not accord with her severe ideas of economy, she had to own that she had been rather lavish in her preparations for work, and that it would be foolish to try now to scrimp at an impossible point.

She would take a coupé by the hour, and perhaps get it cheaper, if she had it several hours; though when she went out for the carriage, she found the driver inflexible, and she had to take it at the usual rate. She bade him drive her to Mrs. Hewitt's door, and she wanted him to go up with her and carry down her basket; but he, seeing her a single defenceless woman, boldly answered that he could not leave his horse; and Helen, indignant, and trembling for her secret, was forced to bring it down herself. Happily, Miss Root had gone out; the Evanses' door was closed; and she encountered Mrs. Hewitt neither in going up nor in coming down. When she lifted the basket on the carriage seat she was out of breath, but exultant at her escape, and with unbroken courage she ordered the driver to go to the address given him. But it now occurred to her that she could not lug that great hamper across a crowded pavement into a shop-door, and she must sell her wares by sample. She employed the drive in taking out the best of the stork vases; one of the most characteristic Flaxmans; and the blackberry and bird-banded jar. She scarcely dared look at them now, but as she gathered them to her bosom with one hand, while she caught up her skirt with the other to alight from the coupé, it was with quite as much hope as fear that her heart palpitated against those classic shapes. She pulled down her veil, however, for she knew that she was blushing violently, and when she stepped upon the ground, she found herself giddy.

The people were all busy when she entered the store, and the gentleman to whom she hoped to speak was occupied with a lady whom Helen knew: a lady who gave proof of having lived abroad by the loud and confident voice which she had succeeded in managing, not like an Englishwoman but like an Englishman. Helen shrank from her recognition, and lurked about, pretending to be interested in distant bricabrac, and growing momentarily more faint and tremulous, but when the lady went out and the gentleman turned from closing the door after her, Helen came quickly forward. She plucked up an excited gasp from somewhere, and waiving the respectful kindness with which he bent to listen, said, "I've something here I'd like to show you," and she unfolded one of her vases, and as he took it up, with "Ah, yes! Something in keramics," she unwrapped the others and set them on the shelf near which they stood. "Why, this is very nice, Miss Harkness," said the dealer, "very nice indeed." He carried all three of the vases to the light and returned with them, holding out the bird-banded jar. "I like this one best. You 've managed these birds and this vine in quite the Japanese spirit: they 're the only people who understand the use of unconventionalised forms. The way your blackberry climbs into the neck of your vase is thoroughly Japanese. These storks are good, too, very effectively handled. The classic subject—well, I don't think that 's quite so successful, do you?"

"No, I don't know that it is," said Helen, so

grateful for his praise of the others that she would willingly have allowed this to be a disgraceful failure.

"Have you ever done anything of this kind before?" asked the dealer.

"No," replied Helen.

"Very remarkable," said the dealer. He had set the vases back on the shelf again, and now gazed at them somewhat absently. "It shows what can be done with this sort of thing. See here!" he called to his partner, who was also disengaged. "Here 's something pretty, and rather new?"

"Your work, Miss Harkness?" asked the other partner politely, coming up. He said much the same things that the first had said; he even stopped a young lady assistant who was passing, and made her admire the jars. Then he also fell into a musing silence, while Helen waited with a thickly beating heart for the rest of her reverie to come true, and stayed herself against a counter, till these amiable partners should formulate some offer for her wares. The young lady assistant ebbed noiselessly away, and went to writing at a high desk; the second partner shifted from his right foot to his left, turned his head abruptly, and feigned to be called suddenly by some duty in the direction to which he looked. His going roused the first partner. "Yes!" he said with a deep, nasal sigh, in coming to himself, and was sinking again into his abstraction, when he seemed to think of something. "Excuse me a moment," he said, and went and looked into the

show window, and then into a dark corner in the back part of the room. "I thought we had some of that Cambridge pottery," he called out to his partner.

"No," said the other, remaining aloof, "we only had a few pieces."

"Well!" said the first, coming back to Helen. "I supposed we had some of it left. I was going to suggest, Miss Harkness, if you 're interested in this sort of thing, that you ought to see that North Cambridge ware. Have you ever seen it?"

"No," answered Helen faintly.

"It isn't so *native* quite in sentiment as this Beverley ware, but it 's much more refined in form. It 's beautifully finished. Really, I don't see how it falls short of that Copenhagen pottery in finish. If you have plenty of time on your hands, you couldn't do a better thing than go out to see them making it. I think it would interest you."

"Thank you," said Helen; her head whirled, but she resolved to speak steadily if it killed her. "I shall certainly go. I 'm glad you mentioned it. I never saw any of it." She fumbled piteously at the papers which she had taken off her vases, and the dealer brought some softer stuff, and skilfully wrapped them up for her.

"These things are quite worthy of Japanese paper," he said, indicating the silky texture of the fabric he had used. "I 'm sure I 'm very much obliged to you for letting us see your work, Miss Harkness. It 's charming. I hope you 'll keep on at

it. I'm interested business-wise, you know," he added, "in having you ladies take up these graceful arts. And be sure and go to see that Cambridge ware. We can get some of it for you, if you wish." He had followed her to the door, and now opened it for her, with a bow.

"Thanks," said Helen. "I won't forget. Good-morning."

"Good-morning."

She got into the coupé, and put her vases carefully back in the basket, and sat down on the seat beside it. She quivered with the intense and bitter disappointment, and she burnt with shame, as every particular of her interview blazoned itself upon her consciousness, and she realised that she had no one but herself to blame for the precise result. The people had been thoroughly kind and sympathetic; they had praised her work, and had been far more interested in it than she had any right to expect; but their taking her on her old social plane had made it impossible for her to meet them on any other. Apparently, they had never once imagined that she wished to sell these things, and she had not known how to approach the fact. They had thought she wished merely to show them as matters of æsthetic interest, but if they had not supposed she came for advice, what could they think of her conceit in making such a display, and of staying and staying till she had all but to be turned out of doors! All that about the Cambridge ware must have been a polite ruse to get rid of her,—to spare

her feelings while they relieved their own. What had kept her from telling them honestly and bravely what she had come for? Did she really expect them to ask her if her work was for sale, as in her reverie; and then offer her that frieze to do in Newport? It was intolerable! She literally bowed herself down in self-contempt, while her heart ached with the sickening defeat of her hopes.

"Where to?" asked a gruff voice.

She had been sitting still in her coupé, and this was the voice of the driver, as he leaned over from his seat, and projected the demand in at the window.

"Oh!" cried Helen. Then she hesitated in a flutter. She had never thought where she should go next; she had not taken any next place into account. "Oh! Drive—drive—" She hesitated again, and then she gave the address of the street where she had bought her pottery. She remembered the decorated pieces there; and they might like hers. At any rate the people did not know her, and she should have the courage to offer them her work.

She began somewhat as at the other place: "I thought you might like to see—," and then corrected herself, and said, "I wished to show you my decoration of some of the Beverley ware I got here the other day."

"O yes," said the shopman, — warily, Helen thought. But she undid her vases, and saw him smile in approval. "They've come out very well," he added, as if they had been subjected to a process.

"Here are some new shapes, which we've just got in to-day."

Helen only glanced at the vases he indicated. "I see you have some decorated pieces here," she said hastily. "Would you like to buy these?"

The man's smile gave place to a look of something like anguish. He took off his hat, and scratched his head. "Well—well—not this *morning*, I think. The fact is, it's a new thing, you know; and these decorated pieces are principally to show what may be done with the ware. We do sell them, but we don't—we don't buy. By and by, I hope we shall be able to do so, but as yet we only expect to supply the plain ware to ladies who wish to paint it. There *are* places where—" He looked still more distressed, and stopped.

Helen hastily wrapped her jars up again, and turned to go. The man followed her a few paces.

"Your own work?" he asked.

"Yes," said Helen shortly, without looking round. "Drive slowly along Washington Street," she ordered, and as the coupé started she blamed herself for not re-opening the parley at the man's last question, and trying to learn of him something about those other places he had begun to mention. She was too much bewildered to do that, but it must have looked like pride. Helen resolved now that she would be not only bold but meek.

She had a plan of stopping at various little shops, in whose windows she remembered seeing artistic caprices, like pictures in birch-bark, and comic

designs jig-sawed out of white-wood. They might somewhere take a fancy to her vases. She stopped accordingly wherever bricabrac showed itself in any sort. The street was full of people, that is to say of women, thronging in and out of the shop-doors, and intent upon spending the money of their natural protectors. It is always a wonderful spectacle, and in the circuit of a quarter of a mile, about the confluence of Washington and Winter Streets, it enforces itself with incomparable vividness.

There is doubtless more shopping in New York or London, or Paris, but in those cities it is dispersed over a larger area, and nowhere in the world perhaps has shopping such an intensity of physiognomy as in Boston. It is unsparingly sincere in its expression. It means business, and the sole business of the city seems to be shopping. The lovely faces of the swarming crowd were almost fierce in their preoccupation, as they pressed into the shop-doors; as they issued from them, and each lady stooped and caught the loop of her train in one hand, while she clasped half-a-dozen paper parcels to her heart with the other, those faces exhibited no relaxation of their eager purpose. Where do they all come from, and where does the money all come from? It is a fearful problem, and the imagination must shrink from following these multitudinous shoppers to their homes, in city and suburb, when they arrive frayed and limp and sore, with overspent allowances, and the hard task before them of making the worse appear the better reason.

Helen was dismayed to realise herself the only one of all her sex who wished to sell, and not to buy, and at the shops which she entered they were puzzled to conceive of her in that unique character. They were busy with the buyers, and when she had waited about patiently, and had at last found a moment to show her work, they only considered it in various patterns of indifference and refusal. For the most part they scarcely looked at it, and Helen found her scantest toleration at those places where she was obliged to deal with women. Commonly they could not put her errand and her coupé intelligibly together; the conjunction seemed to raise suspicion. In one shop it raised laughter, which followed her from the young lady behind the counter, who said quite audibly to the young lady at the desk: "Actually in a coupé! Think I should walk, myself!" Helen, who had now hardened her sensibilities to everything, took the hint, and let the carriage come after her from shop to shop. But that served no purpose except perhaps to excite the fears of the driver lest she should try to escape from him. When every place had been tried, she still had her vases on her arm, which, when she got them back into the basket, she perceived was sore with carrying them.

"Home," she said to the driver, and leaned back against the cushions, and closed her hot dry eyes. She was so benumbed by what she had undergone, that she did not feel very keenly, and her physical fatigue helped off the mental pain. Presently the

carriage stopped, and she saw that they were in a jam of vehicles in front of a large jewelry store. There had been something the matter with her watch, and now she thought she would have it looked at; and she dismounted and went in. She gave her watch to a man behind one of the counters, and while he screwed a glass into his eye, and began to peer and blow into the works, Helen cast a listless look into a window where there were some jars of limoges and plates of modern majolica. A gentleman, who did not look quite like a clerk, came forward. Helen carelessly asked him the price of some of the faïence. It seemed very little, and he explained that it was merely earthenware painted in imitation of the faïence, and began to praise it, and to tell who did it. Helen did not listen very attentively; she was thinking of her own work, and wondering if she should have courage to ask him to look at it, and how, if she should, she could get it from the coupé without awkwardness, when he said, "I see you have something there in the way of our business." Then she saw that she had mechanically gathered up her three vases and brought them in with her on her arm; she had long ceased to wrap and unwrap them. She looked at them stupidly, but said, "Yes, this is something I've been doing;" and the gentleman politely took them, and admired them with a civility that was so cordial to her after the ordeal she had passed through that the tears came behind her veil.

"Do you think," she asked very timidly, "you would like to buy something of the kind?"

"M—m—no," said the gentleman musingly, as he turned one of the vases over in his hand.

Helen's breath came again, and she turned to get her watch, which the workman said was ready; one of the wheels had caught, merely; and there was no charge. She took back her vase, and nodded to the gentleman. He did not bow very definitively in return, but followed her to the door.

"The fact is," he said, "there 's very little sale for these things now. The whole decoration business has been overdone. However," he added, after a pause in which he seemed to take in the fact of Helen's black, "we might chance to dispose of them for you. If you like, you can leave them here on sale." Helen promptly handed him the vases.

"You mustn't form any expectations," he cautioned. "It will *be* a chance. *What* shall I ask for them?"

"Oh, anything—anything you can get," cried Helen desperately. "Nobody wants them."

"Well, we 'll see," said the other, and he now set the vases in the window between the jars of imitation faïence.

Helen timidly offered him her card, and she stole a glance at the vases from the outside, and thought they looked very common, and dreadfully personal. Their being there gave her neither hope nor pleasure.

The door of the coupé stuck fast, and while she stood tugging at it, a policeman stepped up and opened it for her. "See here, my man," he said to the driver, "you 'd better get down and wait on your

passengers decently, or give up the business. What 's your number?" and, while the man mumbled something in explanation and excuse, Helen looked up into the face of her champion. She failed at first to recognise the civil fellow who had come home with her father the day of his seizure, and whom she had met on the steps; but the officer knew her, and touched his hat.

Then she remembered him. "Oh, is it you?" she cried, as if it were some old friend.

"Yes," said the officer, very much pleased.

"I've always wanted to see you again and thank you," began Helen.

"Oh, *that's* all right," answered the officer. "Your father was a *man*, I can tell you. I—I—I was awfully sorry for you, Miss Harkness." He spoke with such simple and honest cordiality that Helen felt it nothing odd to be shaking hands with a policeman at high noon in Washington Street.

"Thank you, you are very kind. Good-bye. I shall never forget your goodness to him that day."

"Oh, don't mention it," said the policeman. He touched his hat again, and vanished in the crowd; and she reflected that she had not asked his name. As she looked in the direction he had gone, she saw not him but herself. She saw herself standing on the threshold of her old, lost home, and turning to look after this man with the stare of amused, haughty wonder, that a girl bred in ease and fashion, and fondly shielded from all that was rude or was abrupt in life, might fitly bend upon such a curious piece

of the social mechanism, unexpectedly and inconceivably related to herself. Her attitude implied secure possession in perpetuity of whatever was gracefully supreme in the world, of whatever was prosperously fastidious and aloof. It was enough to remember this attitude now.

The coupé stopped at Mrs. Hewitt's narrow door, and the man got down and helped her out. "I guess the horse is tired enough to stand while I carry this basket up for you," he said.

Helen had no gratitude to express, and she did not thank him for this service when she took out her purse to pay him. She had kept the carriage two hours and a half, and he said they never counted less than an hour, but he would call it four dollars. As he folded the bills, he said he hoped she did not blame him for not opening the coupé door for her; she got out and in so often, and his horse always started up so when he left the box.

"O no, no!" cried Helen. "Only go, please." She closed the door behind him, and she flung herself upon the bed, and hid her face in her pillow, and drenched it with her rushing tears. Her head ached, and her heart was sore in her breast. All that had happened repeated itself with ceaseless iteration in her mind; all the looks, all the tones, all the words; they burnt, and rang, and hummed in her brain; the long ordeal of her disappointment dramatised itself to the inner sense in thousand-fold swift reverberation; the disappointment was as bitter as if starvation were before her, and the shock to her pride was even

greater. She had fancied, as she now realised, that she should succeed because she was she; while warning herself that she must not expect anything but failure, she had secretly cherished an ideal of triumph that made the future a matter of fortunate inspirations and delightful toil. This was what she had really hoped; and now, to her defeat was added the stinging sense of having been a fool. She had probably set to work quite in the wrong way; and she had been not only a fool, but such a coward as to be afraid to say that she wished to sell her work to the only people who could take a special interest in it. Yet they might not have cared for it either, and if she had spoken she would have had only one ignominy the more to remember. For, what puzzled and surprised Helen most of all was that when she had taken the humblest mien, and approached those shop-people on their own level, as it were, without pretension and without pride, they should have shown no sense of the sacrifice she had made, but should have trampled upon her all the same.

The glamour was gone from her experiment. She was in the mood to accept any conditions of dependence; she wondered at the vain courage with which she had refused the idleness and uselessness of the home offered her by the Butlers.

The dinner bell rang, but she remained with her face in the pillow; after a while some one tapped at her door, and then pushed it softly open and looked in, but she did not stir. Whoever it was must have thought her asleep, and so left her; yet when Helen

opened her eyes there was still some one in her room. A shawl had been flung over her, and Miss Root was sitting at the window looking at her, and apparently waiting for her to wake up.

"Not going to be sick, are you?" she asked. "You 've been sleeping ever since before dinner, and Mrs. Hewitt asked me to look in and see how you were getting along. I guess you haven't taken cold; she put the shawl on you."

"O no!" said Helen, rising briskly, in the first free moment of waking, when care has not yet dropped back upon the heart. "I came in with a headache, and threw myself on the bed to rest."

"That some of your work?" Miss Root indicated with a nod the basket which stood in the middle of the floor where the man had set it. The paper had come off one of the jars, and showed its decoration.

"Yes," said Helen. "I did them—I—" A thought flashed into her mind: "They are for a wedding present!"

"May I look at it?" asked Miss Root.

"Certainly," said Helen, feeling bolder, now that she was protected by this little outwork of unreality against the invasion of Miss Root's sympathy. She unwrapped two or three of the jars and set them on the window seat.

Miss Root did not trouble herself to take them up, but stood at a little distance and glanced at them with an eye that Helen saw understood and classed them, and that made her feel like the amateur she was. The girl turned away without comment.

"I saw some just like them in a window as I came along Washington Street. I pity any poor wretch that expects to live by painting and selling them."

Miss Root could not have meant her equivocal speech in unkindness, for she added, looking back as she went out, "Don't you come down if you don't feel just right; I'll bring up your supper to you."

Helen said she was going down, and arming herself with the courage of her despair, she confronted the question of the tea-table with gaiety even, and made light of her long nap. She said she had been shopping all the morning, and the irony of the phrase in this application flattered her bitter mood. It was a stroke of the finest sarcasm, could they but know it; and in her heart she mocked at their simple acceptance of her statement.

Mr. Evans said he was surprised she could sleep after shopping. When his wife went shopping it kept the whole family awake for the next twenty-four hours, and careworn for a week. Mrs. Hewitt asked about the fashions, and said that she always found things just as cheap and a good deal better at the large stores, and you spent more time and laid out as much money running round to the little places. It seemed to Helen the height of the sardonic to answer, "Yes, it was quite useless to go to the little places."

"D'you find your letters all right, Miss Harkness?" asked the landlady, when this talk had taken its course; "I put 'em on the corner of your mantel."

"No," said Helen; "I didn't look."

"Well, you 'll see 'em when you go back. They came after you went to sleep. The most curious stamps on *I* ever saw!"

Helen's heart stood still with fear and hope, and "Oh, papa, get them for my collection," pleaded the little boy.

"Here," she said, rising, and making this opportune prayer her shelter, "come up with me, and you shall have them;" and after due reproach from his mother, he was suffered to go with her.

It was Robert Fenton's handwriting on the envelopes. "It 's my answer—it 's my sentence,—and I deserve it," she said under her breath, as she stood with the letters in her hand, trying to detach one of the stamps with her trembling fingers.

"There," cried the boy, "you 're tearing it!"

"Never mind," said Helen; "they 're both alike. I'll cut this other off for you;" but her hand shook so that she chopped into the letter a little with the scissors.

"If I couldn't cut better than that!" roared the boy, anxious for the integrity of his stamp. "What makes you get so white, and then get so red?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing!" answered Helen, incoherently. "Here's your stamp," she stooped to give it. The child was pretty, with still grey eyes and full lips. "Will you kiss me, Tom," she asked in a very soft trembling voice, "for good luck?" It seemed as if her fate hung upon his will, but when he hastily kissed her, and ran out, she still had not courage to open the letters. She flung

them on the bed, and locked the door, and then came back and looked at them. She could see a little of the writing in one through the hole where she had cut away the stamp, and she tried to make out the words; they were such words as "from," and "for," and "with."

If there had been but one letter, she thought, she should not have been afraid of it; but this mystery of there being two! She tried putting one out of sight under the pillow, but that did no good. Her sole comfort was that while they were still unopened she did not know the worst; but in the meantime she was consumed with a terrible curiosity. She studied them hard, and then walked away to the furthest corner.

"Oh, what *is* it in them? Indeed, I couldn't bear anything after to-day, indeed I couldn't!" she whimpered. "I *can't* open them!" and then she pounced upon one of them in a frenzy and tore it open.

X.

THE character of no man is fixed till it has been tried by that of the woman he loves. Till then he has only the materials of character, and they are all to be shaped and ordered as newly as if he had never had them before. The thousand and one mysteries of Helen's girlish uncertainty, her fantastic waverings, her æsthetic coquetries with the idea of being in love, were as unintelligible to Fenton as his headlong and outspoken passion was to her. But while she thought his bluntness charming, in a way, and constantly trembled nearer and nearer to him in her heart, Fenton was far too simple a fellow to feel anything but trouble at the misgivings and delays which she enjoyed. When at last he made what he felt must be his last offer, and she met it with all those freshly alarmed ideals and metaphysical scruples, which a wiser and worse man would have trampled under foot,—tearing her from herself, as she unconsciously meant, and making her his in her own despite, as she reluctantly wished, Fenton lost his head in a delirium of angry and wounded pride.

When he awoke from it, irretrievably committed

to three years' exile, it was in a self-abhorrence and despair, and a sort of stupefaction that he should have done what he had done. His repentance came before he had forgiven Helen, and long before he had begun to conceive that the letter might have another meaning than that which he had first taken from it. Of his own light, perhaps, he never saw more in it than it seemed to say. It was without reading it again, without having the heart to look at it, that he hated himself for what he had done, and loathed himself for his futile desire to make reparation. It was impossible to repair his fault, and if it were possible, it would be despicable to attempt it.

He went haggardly about his duty, a machine that did its work, but with no more mind upon it than a machine. There came long spaces of time in which he afterwards recognised that he had not known what he was doing; that he had been altogether absent without having been anywhere else; he awoke from these absences as from a profound, dreamless torpor, and with a start of fear and amaze, to find that all had been going well in the meantime, that he had been talking, eating, and drinking, and shrewdly attentive to whatever immediately concerned him. It would have been hard for him to say whether the time when he was on duty, and no one spoke to him, or the leisure in which he was intimately thrown with his brother officers was the more terrible: his solitude was dense with piercing regrets, that stung for ever in the same place; his association with others was tormented by an un-

forgettable remorse, which, if it seemed to grant him a moment's oblivion, awoke him presently, from somebody's joke or story, to the consciousness that it had only been more deeply and inwardly gnawing his soul.

Some sort of action was indispensable, but action which did not relate to Helen, was none. He began to write letters to her. He had no idea of sending them, but it had grown insufferable to be perpetually talking to her as he was in those airy dramas within himself; and since his words could not be made audible, he must let them take visible shape. This became his daily habit; and before the ship reached Rio de Janeiro he had accumulated a score of letters, which he bitterly amused himself by reading over, and considering, and putting by without destroying. He kept them, and found a sort of miserable relief in communing with them instead of his intangible thoughts. His industry did not escape the idle vigilance of the ship's comradery; but at sea every one must be suffered his whim, and after laughing at Fenton's, they left him to it, in the feigned belief that it was a book he was writing: a marine novel, they decided. Each thought it in the way of his rightful joke to say, "Don't put me into it, Fenton," till Fenton, who worked up slowly to his repartees, found presence of mind at last to answer, "No; I can't afford to make it dull, you know," and then they left him quite alone, with a roar at the expense of the chance victim. Before the laugh was over, Fenton had almost ceased to know what it was

about, and had wholly ceased to care. He was quite too miserable to be glad of the immunity he had won.

He went on with his letter-writing; but on the eve of arrival at Rio de Janeiro he destroyed all his work, and set about writing one letter, which should be his last. It was his purpose to post this without reference to consequences, as an act of final expiation. He was not without some trembling illusion that there might be a letter awaiting him: he did not dare to think from Helen, and he could not think from whom else. But his letter was to go before he knew what was in that, or even whether it existed. He had no reason to suppose it did exist; it was in fact as purely a figment of his distempered fancy as a starving man's visions of feasting; and when he had faithfully posted his letter before going to the consul to ask if there were anything for him, he could not make out that it was disappointment that sickened him to find there was nothing. But a mail was expected the following day, and he kept his wrecked hopes adrift upon its possibilities during the night.

The mail brought him no letter, but it brought the consul a copy of *The Boston Advertiser*, which he politely offered to Lieutenant Fenton unopened, not having the leisure just then for the newspaper. Fenton unfolded it with indifference, and mechanically glanced at the marriages. The paper was of a date four or five days after he had sailed, and the name of Helen Harkness did not appear in the mar-

riage list. He had not expected that it would, nevertheless he had looked at the marriages on her account; and he was about laying the paper aside when the record of a single death caught his eye. It was the death of Helen's father, with a dozen lines of mortuary praise. He dropped the paper.

"Nothing in the *Advertiser?*" asked the consul, who was busy about some letters, without looking up.

"Too much!" said Fenton, pulling his cap over his eyes.

The consul thought this was a joke, and laughed in a companionable, uninterested way. Fenton looked at him and saw his innocence, and then he sat a long time in silence, with his arms folded, and his head down. At last he asked the consul if he could give him a sheet of paper and an envelope, and briefly wrote the second of the two letters which had reached Helen together. In her desperation, she had found no resource but to open them according to the order of the dates in their postmarks, and she had seized first upon that of the 9th. It began simply, *Helen*, and it ran in this way:—

"I hope you will have patience to read this letter through, though I have forfeited all right to a hearing from you. I am not going to make an appeal for your forgiveness, because I know I ought not to have it. I have suffered, not all that I ought to suffer, but all that human nature can suffer for that letter I sent you from Portsmouth. But I shall not try to work upon your pity; I believe that I have

that already. I only wish you to understand that in again renouncing all pretensions to your regard, I do it with a full approval of your conduct to me. I do not blame you in the least thing. I see that I was altogether to blame. I see what I did not see before: that you never cared for me, and that you tried with all your heart, to be kind to me, and yet not to give me hope. I thank you for your goodness, and I beg you to believe, when you have read this letter, that my eyes are open at last, and that if I keep on loving you, it is because my love of you has become my life, and that I know I am no more worthy to love you than I am to live. I cannot help one or the other, but I can keep either from being troublesome to you, and I will. So I do not ask you to admit any of my former pretensions, but only to let me be your friend, in whatever humble and useful way I can. I consider myself a disgraced man, and I shall expect nothing of you but the kind of forbearance and patience you would show some repentant criminal who was depending upon your countenance for strength to reform himself.

"I know you have told Mr. Harkness of my Portsmouth letter, and that he must be very much incensed with me. But though I do not ask your forgiveness, Helen, I do beseech you to try to get me his. I owe him all the little good there is in me, and I owe him all that I am and have done in this world. I could not tell you how dearly and truly I honour and love him. The thought that I came away without trying to take leave of him chokes

me; but after writing you that fatal letter, everything that was right and decent became impossible.

"Good-bye, Helen.

"ROBERT FENTON."

When Helen had finished this letter, which, indeed, she seemed instantly to divine rather than to read, she not only kissed it but pressed it to her breast and locked her arms upon it, clasping it close, as if it were some living thing and could feel the wild, happy tumult of her heart. She wept long and sweetly over it. It might not have been the perfection of reason to another, but to her all the parts were linked together by an impenetrable and infrangible logic. Nay, it was not that, it was not eloquence; it was the sum of everything, it was love, and however hapless love to the writer, it was heaven-prospered passion to Helen, who seemed in that fond embrace to implore, to forgive, to console Robert, as if he were there present and she had fallen upon his neck. They were happy, and they were happy together; it was so much to know that she need never wish to know more.

For some time, in the rush of her emotion, she did not realise that it was not an answer to her own letter. But it was infinitely more. It forestalled and anticipated her letter, as that, when it came to his hand, would in its turn be both appeal and response to him. Best of all, his letter made the first advance towards reconciliation, and assumed for Robert the blame for what she had suffered. She

knew that he was not wholly to blame, but as a woman she liked to have him say that he was, and she liked him to be generously first in owning himself wrong—that always seems a man's part.

She had almost forgotten the letter of later date, the letter of the 10th, which still lay unopened before her. That, too, would be precious, but never so dear as this of the 9th, which should always be first in the history of their love; the other, no matter how sweet it proved, must always remain second. It was, in fact, not a fortunate inspiration. In his grief at the news which he had just read, Fenton's mind had reverted to the old relation in which he had first known Helen, and in the presence of the bereavement that they had both suffered in the loss of one who had been no less a father to him than to her, he addressed her as a sister, and signed himself as her brother Robert. These words, coming upon the different tenderness his other letter had evoked, seemed to push her coldly from him, to disown their love and to ignore it, to take her at a certain disadvantage with respect to the sorrow in which they humbly asked a brother's share; they made her jealous in a wild sort of her sorrow, they indescribably wounded her so that she threw the letter from her and wept bitter tears for the happy ones she had shed. It was such a letter as no woman would have written if she had been a man! She should not know which letter to answer now, nor how to answer either; for if she answered the first as she would have done, might not Robert think her

bold and unfilial? and if she answered the second as she ought, would she not appear reserved and cold with him upon whom her heart had just thrown itself with such tender abandon? The letters made two Roberts of him, and left her to despair between them.

She passed a hapless night, and in the morning she took the first train after breakfast for Beverley, where she appeared at the Butlers' before ten o'clock, asking in such a high hysteric key for Mrs. Butler, who was not yet down, that they led her at once to her room. There she threw up her veil, revealing eyes tragic with tears and want of sleep, and gave the two letters into Mrs. Butler's hand while she hid her face in Mrs. Butler's pillow.

"O Helen, Helen!" said the elder lady, when she had spelled through these documents in the dim light, "how glad I am for you! Come, look at me, my dear, and let me see your happy face! This makes up your quarrel, and you are— Why, Helen!" she cried, when the girl obeying, bent those eyes of tragedy upon her, "what is the matter? Don't you—didn't you—"

"O yes, I care for him—all the world!" Helen broke out. "But the more I care for him the worse it is, and unless you can help me out of this trouble, Mrs. Butler, I shall surely go crazy. Oh, how indelicate it is of me to come to you! But I don't know what to do—I don't know what to do; I 'm so horribly alone! And it 's such a very strange, ridiculous thing!" She did not suffer herself to pause, while Mrs. Butler stared compassionately at

her, till she had put her in full possession of her perplexity, and explained how it had poisoned all her joy.

Mrs. Butler did not laugh at her; she was one of those high spirits who perceive the sacred rather than the absurd, and amidst the girl's wild talk, she saw the reasonableness of pain that to a coarser sense would only have been ludicrous. "You must not think of this second letter at all, Helen," she said seriously. "Shall I tear it up?"

"Oh, oh!" said Helen, half-reaching for it, and yet holding her hand. "It's about papa, and—it's from *him!*" She caught her breath, and trembled for Mrs. Butler's decision.

"I didn't think of destroying it," said the other, "but I'm not going to let you have it back. This is the only letter you've got, Helen, for the present," she added, handing the girl the first, and putting the second under her pillow. "The letter that you sent him the other day—wouldn't that be a kind of answer to this?"

"Why, yes!" cried Helen with electrical perception.

"Well, then, answer the first. I want you to let me keep this till—till I can give it back to Mrs. Fenton."

"Oh!" said Helen.

"And kiss me, my dear," said Mrs. Butler fondly; "and bathe your eyes yonder. And if you touch the left hand-bell, Marian will come up."

"Oh!" said Helen in the same shaken tone as before. "Shall you—shall you tell *her?*"

"No; you shall," replied Mrs. Butler. But when

Marian came, it was Mrs. Butler who had to explain the embrace in which Helen seized her, and which, first returning with mechanical affection, she now returned with rapturous intelligence.

"Engaged?" she exulted. "Oh, Helen, Helen, Helen!"

"Why," cried Helen, laughing from her happy heart, and pulling away from her friend, "I don't know what you call it. I've written him a making-up letter, and he's written me one, and they've crossed on the way."

"Oh, *that's* an engagement," said Marian, with the authority of a connoisseur.

"But he hasn't got my letter yet, and I'm not engaged till he has."

"That's nothing. *He's* engaged, because you've got his, and in an engagement the man counts for everything; the girl goes without saying." Marian Butler was at that period full of those airs of self-abnegation with which women adorn themselves in the last days of betrothal, and the first of marriage, and never afterwards.

They talked Helen's whole affair over, in the light of the full candour which she was able to bring to bear upon it now for the first time. As to feelings she must still have her reserves; but as to facts, she made them little by little all theirs; it helped her to realise Robert to be talking of him by his name, and to hear others doing so. At the sound of approaching footsteps without, Marian said—

"Now mother, those children are not to know

about this. They 're too forthputting now, especially Jessie."

Ignorant of this supreme interest, the younger sisters were richly content with Helen's further account of her boarding-house life, which she continued to them like an instalment of some intoxicating romance. When she came to the end of her chapter, she stopped with a manner that roused their worst suspicions.

"Oh, she 's keeping something back!" complained Jessie, and "Oh, oh!" went up from the others.

"Yes!" cried Helen, "I 'm keeping back the best of all, because it doesn't seem as if I *could* tell it."

While they all stared, she abruptly began the confession of her experiment in decorative keramics. She was by this time in high spirits, and she poured it all out, illustrating, mimicking, not sparing herself in the minutest particular of conceited expectation or forlorn reality. It was all past now, far past, and was part of a former existence which she had suddenly outlived by an untraversable period of time. It made them laugh, Marian with amusement, and Mrs. Butler with a sort of grieving compassion; as for the young girls, it seemed to them the wildest and most enviable adventure that ever was known out of a book.

"And you didn't meet a soul—not a soul you knew?" asked Mrs. Butler.

"O no; *no* one shops in Boston now, you know; and I was perfectly safe. But I shouldn't have cared."

"I should have been glad of it!" cried Jessie Butler. "I should have liked to lug my basket up and poke it into their carriage-doors, and offer to sell them the things, and see how they would *look!*"

"Jessie!" said her mother.

"Well, never mind. Go on, go on, Helen!"

"That's all," said Helen, who had brought them back to the period of her return to her room and her long desperate slumber. "No, the worst is to come! Miss Root came in while I was asleep, and discovered them; and what do you think I told her? I told her I had been doing them for a wedding present!"

There was fresh sensation at this, but Jessie exclaimed, "Marian Butler shall never have those vases in the world. They shall be *sold!* The idea! *I* will go up and sell them!"

"No," said Helen soberly; "she must take them, Jessie, to save me from fibbing, if nothing else. Besides, you suggested painting pottery, Marian, and they're Beverley ware—all very appropriate, you see. And some of them are not so bad. And I can't give you anything better till—*my ship comes home!*"

At this idea of a ship, and of its coming home, Helen and Marian simultaneously pressed each other's hands, where they sat side by side on the lounge, with delicious intelligence. Marian said that she should prize Helen's present more than anything else that could be given her, and that its history, which could not be known out the family, would make it all the more precious; the legend would be something

to tell the future age. It would be great to say, "Only think of your great-grandmother going about the whole day with these beautiful things, and not being able to sell them for a crust of bread to keep her from starving."

"Marian," said her mother, "I can't let you make a joke of it. I can't help thinking how wretched it would have been if poor Helen had really been in need."

"Indeed I *was* in need, Mrs. Butler," said Helen, "while I was doing those things. I felt just as *destitute!* And I worked at them, early and late, as if my life depended upon it."

"Oh, that's a very different thing, my dear," said Mrs. Butler. "It was only play poverty, after all. Think if you had really been some poor girl, with nothing, and had met with such a disappointment!"

"I don't believe I could have suffered more," said Helen, confidently.

"I'm glad you've no means of knowing certainly. But now that you've tried your experiment, Helen, hadn't you better end this little escapade, and come back to us? Things have come about very fortunately," she added quickly, at a look of refusal in Helen's eye, "and your failure to earn a living makes it easier for me to tell you something that's been rather weighing upon my mind."

She spoke with a double sense to Helen, who understood that it was not her failure, but the letter from Robert which made it easy for Mrs. Butler to say what followed.

"We have concluded not to wait a month after

Marian is married, before we sail, but to go the next week. We shall not try to run them down— Girls," she broke off, and speaking with the tone of authority which they knew when they heard it, "go and see where your father is," and when they were gone, she resumed,—"but we shall follow them up pretty closely, and we shall meet them in Venice just before they start from Trieste for Egypt. Now, Marian!"

"And there," said Marian, "Miss Harkness, who has come to that point with the bride's family, will join the happy couple, and make one of their party up the Nile. It 's to be a trusteeship, Helen," she cried, "it can't be resigned; you must come. We are going to take a dahabeiah at Cairo, with some Philadelphia friends of Ned's, very quiet people whom he took a great fancy to; and I want you along to do the correct, and elegant, and superior thing for Boston, and leave me to uninterrupted enjoyment of the sillies. Yes, Helen, you must come. Ned wishes it as much as I, and I can't tell you how much that is. We want to take you away from yourself, and we promise to bring you back in a year—" She hesitated: "I was pausing for want of an idea, but say—improved in every way."

"Oh, I can't!" lamented Helen. She leaned back upon the lounge, and brooded upon the matter in a silence to which the others left her unmolested. "It isn't because it doesn't seem the loveliest and kindest thing in the world, Marian, and I 've no peasant-pride that would prevent me from accepting it; and it isn't because I think I should do better to go on

trying to take care of myself, Mrs. Butler. I know that I 'm a distinct failure in that way, and I haven't any heart or conceit for further experiments. But— I must stay! He will come back—I know he will come back, as soon as he gets that letter of mine— and he must find me here waiting for him. It would be a shocking kind of treachery if I were away."

"You could write to him now that you were going with us," said Marian, a good deal shaken by the heroism of Helen's position, "and he could meet you somewhere abroad."

Mrs. Butler said nothing.

"The second letter might miss," replied Helen, as if the first letter could not.

"You could keep writing," urged Marian, "before you sailed, and then from Europe."

"No; it wouldn't do. He must find me here waiting for him; and I mustn't stir from the spot till he gets back. I don't know how to explain it exactly. But it would look very queer and light-minded, wouldn't it, if I went off junketing up the Nile, while he was thinking all the time that I was forlornly waiting for him in Boston, and was as unhappy as he till we met? Besides, I feel this way about it, after what has passed between us: I ought not to be on a high horse of any sort when Robert comes back. I feel that it is his right and his due to be able to stoop to me a little; and it would only be a just reparation for me to be in very humble circumstances when I met him. Doesn't that seem like a kind of reason to you, Mrs. Butler?"

"Yes," assented Mrs. Butler doubtfully; "a little romantic!"

"Do you think so?" asked Helen, rather hurt; "I hoped you would think it sensible."

"I do, my dear, I do," Mrs. Butler hastened to reply, "from your point of view."

"There's this, too," Helen added, not quite appeased, after a hesitation. "Robert hasn't any money, but his pay; and I only have such a very little, that we couldn't begin living like rich people; and the question is whether I had better keep on living as I used to do, or whether I hadn't better get accustomed to something very plain and simple at once."

"Yes," said Mrs. Butler, while Marian fidgeted in protest, but said nothing.

"I try to look at it quite dispassionately, and in the light of common sense, without any foolishness, and it seems to me that I shouldn't be doing right unless I were making some sacrifice for Robert, and suffering, don't you know, in some way; I should not be happy unless I were. You know," she said softly, "that I don't think I always used Robert very well. I don't mean that I meant to; but I didn't understand myself; and now that I do, and understand him, I should be detestable, if I went off to be pleased and diverted, while he was hurrying home with his mind burning upon the thought that I was waiting here in perfect wretchedness till he came. Don't you see? I must be here, and I must be wretched, to be perfectly true to him!"

"You are right, Helen!" cried Mrs. Butler, deeply moved by this divine logic of the heart. "Hush, Marian, don't speak! You know she is right. Come here, Helen!" The matron embraced the girl in the fervour of that youth which women of all ages have in common. "We won't say anything more of this matter, Marian, and we will just tell your father that Helen can't go. You won't mind my letting out a little of your secret to him?"

"O no!" blushed Helen. "I had expected you to tell him."

Captain Butler would once have teased the girl about her happiness. But since her father's death he seemed not to have been able to treat her lightly; her loss and her uncertain future made her a serious affair to him; and now that her father was gone, Helen was startled at times to find how much his old friend was like him. There were tones and movements of strange resemblance; perhaps the impression came partly from Captain Butler's impaired health; he was certainly not well, and that made her think of her father. He took what Mrs. Butler told him very much as her father would have done, she thought, and he expressed his satisfaction almost as quietly. His only revenge was to ask:—

"Shall you answer in care of the Navy Department, or would you like to telegraph a reply?"

"Oh, Captain Butler," cried Helen, "*could* I telegraph?"

"Yes," said the Captain. "How would you word your despatch?"

"Mr. Butler!" said his wife in reproach.

"I—I don't know!" gasped Helen.

"It wouldn't reach him, now, any sooner than your letter of three weeks ago. He 'll find that at Hong Kong when he gets there, and you wouldn't know where to hit him with a telegram on the way. If your letter was posted at Rio, the Muskingum—"

"Messasauga," Helen softly corrected him.

"Was it Messasauga?—is going round the Cape of Good Hope, and she must have passed that point a week ago, and she won't stop at any other telegraphic port, probably. Here," said the Captain, with rising interest, "I 'll show you his course."

He got a chart out of the library, and Helen began to study navigation with the impassioned devotion which love lends to intellectual pursuits. One observes this ardour in two young persons of opposite sexes who take up some branch of literature or science together, which they might not perhaps have thought of, if they had not thought of each other. It has been known to cast a purple light upon metaphysics. Helen borrowed the chart and brought it away with her.

It was a happy day, and its memory remained to sweeten the days in the increasing bustle of preparation for Marian's wedding, when Helen saw her friends less and less, and then the days when she saw them no more.

XI.

HELEN'S letter, crossing the letter Fenton wrote at Rio de Janeiro, reached him at Hong-Kong. It added, after the first hours of rapture, the anguish of a hopeless longing to the remorse he had been suffering. It was no longer a question of her forgiveness; but he did not find it easier, now that he had the assurance of her love, to forgive himself for his rashness; he thought of her alone in her sorrow, without the instant sympathy and support which she had a right to expect from him, even if there had been no tie but their common affection for her father between them; and his whole life centred in an impulse to return to her somehow from the banishment he had inflicted upon himself. But he had himself made return impossible—for the present at least—by the terms on which he had sought exile; he must wait and he must suffer—that would have been simple enough—and he must also make her wait and suffer. When he came to this conclusion, as he always must, it was with a mental shock that was like a veritable concussion of the brain, that left him weaker day by day, and that broke him at last. He fell sick of a disorder that baffled the science of the surgeon when he visited him in his room.

"What the devil *is* the matter with you? I believe in my soul you're *trying* to make a die of it," said the doctor, a cheerful, elderly man, tight in his uniform.

"No man ever wanted to live as I do," answered Fenton.

"Well, then, you must brace up. I'll give you a tonic. Make you up a bottle and send it to you." The doctor felt his pulse again and said, "You're either down with the climate, and that affects your spirits, or else it's your spirits that affect your health. But in any case you must brace up." As Fenton lay perfectly still with his face turned away, Dr. Simmons passed his hand over the top of his head where a perspiration of perplexity had gathered in the scattering down. "I can't minister to a mind diseased, you know," he suggested.

"No," said Fenton.

"You must go to some other shop."

He got himself with difficulty out of Fenton's door into the ward-room, and presently sent him the bottle. It seemed to make him worse, and the doctor visited him again in renewed mystification. After the usual inspection, he sat looking at Fenton as before, and then said casually, "What a lucky chap Nixon is, going home on leave so soon!"

Fenton sat up. "Going *home!* O my God!" He fell back on his pillow, and the doctor nodded his head.

"I thought so. You're homesick. Nixon isn't going home; but if you keep on in this way, *you* are

—in a box. This thing will kill you as sure as you live, if you don't fight it, and if you've got particular reasons for living, as you intimated the other day, you 'd better make the most of them. Get leave and go off somewhere for a while. Amuse yourself; try to forget about it. You can worry it off somehow. You *must;* and so I tell you."

"Two days after I sailed the man who had taken care of me all my life, and been more than a father to me, died suddenly, and left his only child alone in the world," said Fenton desperately. "How am I to worry that off? I ought to be there—to help her, to take care of her, to show the gratitude that common decency—"

"Well, that *is* bad," assented the doctor. "But she 's got friends, of course?"

"Oh, *friends,* yes!"

"And of course she 'll be looked after. You must try to see the bright side of it," added the doctor. "There 's a bright side to everything."

"Do you think so? Then I 'll tell you the bright side to this. I came away in a quarrel with them—a quarrel where I was to blame—without seeing them or saying a word to them; and I can't ask leave to go home, because I made a point of getting ordered here. That 's the bright side of it!"

"It isn't very dazzling," admitted the doctor, with the smile that men put on at other men's troubles of sentiment. "But it isn't a thing to be morbid about. You can write home and explain. You 're a little under the influence of the climate here; you 'll

see all these things differently when you're used to it. I'd better give you some quinine. There's no use in giving way; you'll only make bad worse."

The shame of having confessed to an anxiety that another seemed to find so slight was a powerful auxiliary in the effort of will that Fenton made to overcome its physical effects. He succeeded so far that he was able to go on duty again, after a week or two, and to live doggedly on from day to day in that double consciousness where the secret trouble remains a dull, incessant ache underneath all the outward conditions. It began to be a superstition with him that something must happen, some chance of escape must offer; he could not yet bring himself to the thought of the last resort, though the knowledge that at the end of all he could resign and go home continually tempted him.

Helen's letters, as they came, were brave and hopeful, and Fenton only wrote of the time when they should meet; he instinctively wrote as if this time must be near. Then the mere lapse of days and weeks began to have its effect as it does in every human affliction; it lessened his burden by making it a thing of custom, to which his life adjusted itself. He had not less to bear, but he had learned better how to bear it; and the pride and joy which he had felt in Helen's love, even when he felt himself least worthy of it, seemed more and more his right, and less and less his unlawful possession. Apparently she was pleasantly placed in the house which she amusingly described to him, and she was living quietly and trustfully on there,

waiting for his return. She wrote him very freely about everything else, but she shrank from telling him of her experiment in decorating pottery for sale, because she would not let him know that she had ever thought herself in need. She never spoke of any need in her life except his return; she only spoke of that in answer to his letters saying that he would use every effort to get back, and then she said that they must both have patience, and that she would be content to wait all her days for him, rather than have him do anything that he would not have done if she had not wished. She said something that made Fenton smile, about her knowing that he would not dream of deserting his post of duty; and then she begged his forgiveness if she had seemed to express any fear of such a thing; and again she said that she was very well and very contented, and that he must not worry about her, and she only wished that he could look into her little room at Mrs. Hewitt's, and see how comfortable she was.

To the next letter, which reached him a month later, she put a postscript in which she offered to give him back every word that bound him to such a helpless and foolish creature as she was, but told him that it would kill her if he consented. "If it were not for thinking of you, Robert, I should hardly have the courage to keep up. If you were ever to be unkind to me again, no matter if it were entirely my fault, I could not forgive you, but I should die in the attempt. There are some things," she added, with subtle relevancy, "about my everyday

life, and its cares and difficulties, that make me wish for your advice, but you are too far away for that; and if you were here, I should not have the troubles, and should not need the advice. It all comes from my not having any head for figures, and not calculating beforehand instead of afterwards, when it does no good; and then I have to pay a poor girl's penalty for flinging money away as no rich girl ought."

The day she wrote, Helen had met in the street one of the women whom she had put down on her list of the things "To be given away" before the auction, for certain tables, chairs, and bedsteads, which Captain Butler, in the use of a wise discretion, had ordered to be sold for the benefit of the estate. Mrs. Sullivan, though poor, was not proud, and she was one of those who had formerly profited by the sums which Helen saved from hack-hire. She now thanked her for a small present of old clothes, which, being sent her before Captain Butler's agency in Helen's charities began, had really reached her. Helen saw the expectation of future old clothes in the woman's eye, and thought it right to cut off her vain hope.

"I'm afraid I shall not have any more clothes for you very soon," she said coldly. "I must wear my old things myself after this." Then, with some exasperation at being invited to an impossible beneficence, where she had already done so much, she added: "I hope you found the furniture useful, Mrs. Sullivan?"

"What foornitoor, Miss?" quavered the poor woman, reduced to destitution by the idea of the prosperity that had evaded her; and it came out that she had never received the things intended for her.

Helen did not pause to inquire how this had happened. "There has been some misunderstanding, Mrs. Sullivan," she said loftily; "but I don't intend that you shall be the sufferer by it." She gave Mrs. Sullivan everything she had in her porte-monnaie except some horse-car tickets. "It may not be so much as the furniture was worth, but it's ready money, and no doubt you can buy things with it that you would rather have."

Mrs. Sullivan was apparently not inclined to this opinion; the loss because uncertain seemed greater; but she did not fail to invoke God's favour upon Helen, and she asked for her washing, as an amend for the unmerited deprivation which the Sullivan family had undergone through her. Helen hurried home, and found that she had given Mrs. Sullivan all her money but ten dollars, and that now she must encroach upon her capital at last. She must go to the lawyer in whose hands Captain Butler had left her money, and ask him for some of it. She could have wept for vexation at her rashness, and shame for the necessity to which it had brought her; but the sum of her varying moods was the mood of self-pity in which she wrote that postscript to Robert. She was sorry for it as soon as she had posted the letter, but even then she merely regretted it as the

expression of a mood, which she had always said was foolish in writing a letter.

Fenton had never imagined her poor, or in need of any kind; the fancy of a lover does not deal with material circumstances; but he now made ample amends for past failure. He took unsparing blame to himself for the false delicacy that had kept him from asking in what state her father's affairs had been left, for not making her tell him how much or how little she had. At this first vague hint of cares and difficulties,—of the necessity of saving,—which she had allowed to escape her, he saw her in a poverty that scarcely stopped short of the municipal soup-kitchen. With the distance which he had put between them, how could he hope to help her? How could he even intimate his longing to do so, without wounding her? He wore himself out in vain contrivance for getting his pay to her in some secret and anonymous way.

Her next letter was cheerful and happy, with no hint of trouble; but he could see nothing in it but a feint of gaiety, a pretence to keep him in heart about her; and the effect of time and will were undone in him.

"I don't understand all this bother of yours, Fenton," said the doctor, to whom he applied once more. "But I guess you 've got to go home. You 're dying here."

"Going home doesn't follow," replied Fenton.

"You 're useless, and worse than useless, as you are, here," continued the doctor. "I know how you

feel about it; you feel that it's a disgrace to give up; but you're sick, and you're as irresponsibly sick as if you had the consumption. You have got to look at it in that light."

"I can't go," said Fenton.

"Oh, very well," retorted the doctor. "I can't force a man to live."

That night, as Fenton sat in the wardroom with two or three others, who were smoking and reading, while he pretended to read, the figure of Helen suddenly glided out of the empty air, and paused full form before him; it melted by slow degrees away, her face vanishing last, and leaving him with a sense of her strange look: it was neither sad nor reproachful, but of a peculiarly sweet and gentle archness.

He turned a ghastly countenance on the doctor, whom he found looking at him across the table. He trembled to his feet, and the doctor ran round and helped him to his room. "Well?" he impatiently demanded, when they were alone in his room.

"She's dead! I saw her ghost!" whispered Fenton. The perspiration, which stood in drops on his forehead, bathed the clammy hand with which he clutched the doctor's warm hairy fist.

"I agree to the ghost," the doctor answered cheerfully, "but I guess she isn't dead, all the same."

"You think not?" queried Fenton with a childish submissiveness. "But—but I saw her!"

"Oh, no doubt," replied Simmons. "If you keep on at this rate, you'll see a ball-room full of her! It's a phenomenon of your condition. You turn in,

now, and I'll make you up a bottle that will keep her away till to-morrow night, anyway."

The surgeon had the professional humanity, and he would have pitied Fenton as the doctor pities his patient, even if he had felt no personal kindness for him. But he really had a liking for the young fellow; he respected him as the most striking case of nostalgia that had ever come under his notice. The case was all the more interesting from the character of the man, which was one of stubborn endurance in everything; his pride was as evident as his quick temper; and yet here he was, beaten down, perfectly broken up, by a purely moral disorder. "If I had not got that man away," Doctor Simmons could say in imaginable boastings that were to hold future wardrooms in awe, "he would have died, sir; died of sheer home-sickness!"

Of any other sort of sickness with which the nostalgia was complicated, no intimation seemed to have penetrated to the doctor's thickened consciousness; it was long since he had had any love affairs of his own; the passion, as he had observed it later in life, was not apt to manifest itself in any such condition as Fenton's; he ascertained that the apparition was that of the lieutenant's adoptive sister, and he rested in that knowledge. But the fact that patients suffering from nostalgia were sometimes haunted by visions of absent friends was an incident of the malady noted in the books, and upon its occurrence every possible means should be made to secure their return home.

It was upon this authority and this conviction that Doctor Simmons approached the Admiral in Fenton's behalf. He explained the case with scientific zeal, and then dwelt upon the peculiar circumstances which rendered it impossible for Mr. Fenton to apply for leave to return, while he was at the same time in such a condition of mind that to condemn him for service by medical survey, and send him home in that way, would be simply sentencing him to death. The doctor acknowledged the irregularity of his own proceeding in making this appeal; but he urged the extremity and the delicacy of the case in justification: Mr. Fenton would certainly not survive if he remained in the station; Doctor Simmons staked his professional reputation upon that, and without presuming to suggest anything, he begged the Admiral to consider whether some public interest could not be served by Mr. Fenton's return on duty. The next day Fenton received orders to sail by the first steamer from Yokohama with despatches for Washington. It was at the time of the war between Japan and Corea, in which, as is well known, certain eventualities threatened to compromise American interests.

When Doctor Simmons visited his patient after the orders reached him, he was rewarded for the tact with which he had accomplished his difficult task by Fenton's accusation that he had brought the result about. He expected this, and in the interest of science, he met the accusation with lies so prompt that they would have carried conviction to any mind

less sore and disordered than Fenton's. He told him that his orders were a god-send, and advised him not to trouble himself about how or why they had been given. In fact the situation admitted of nothing but obedience; upon the face of it there was no point that the most self-accusing scruples could lay hold of; and Fenton discovered with helpless shame that all the natural forces in him were fighting against his broken will. He was quite ready for the steamer that sailed in a few days for Yokohama and San Francisco; and he accepted his good fortune upon the best terms he could. When it was too late he began to realise his obligation to the man who had saved his life, and given it back to him with such hope as now rioted in his heart at every thought of Helen and of home. He was a week out from Yokohama, and he could do nothing but write a letter to the surgeon, trying to make up for his past thanklessness by a vain and remote profusion of gratitude.

He was, as he figured it, only a fortnight from San Francisco, and unless he suffered some detention at Washington, only a little over three weeks from Helen. The possibility that he might be ordered away upon some other service before he saw her occurred to him, but only as one of those disasters which each of us regards as too cruel and monstrous ever to happen to himself. He bet on the highest figures in the pools formed to guess at the run of the ship from day to day; and the lady who held the pools was not long in divining the cause of his

sanguine faith in a short passage. Mrs. Bowers was going to join her husband in San Francisco; the similarity of their objects gave them a natural interest in each other, and a man of Fenton's ordinary good sense and reserve was capable of confiding in this sympathising listener, with the lover's ingenuous egotism, so incredible to us later in life. He talked continually of Helen to her, when perhaps she would much rather have had him talk about himself, as they walked up and down the deck together; he told her everything but Helen's name, which she threatened she would have yet before they got to San Francisco. In the meantime they always spoke of Helen as the Mystery. It was folly, but it made Fenton transcendently happy; these confidences brought Helen nearer, they realised her; they almost, in the spiritualists' phrase, materialised her. The time came when, the moonless night being propitious, he told Mrs. Bowers of the apparition of Helen, and asked her what she thought of it. She said that she thought it the most wonderful thing she had ever heard of: but she owned that she did not know what it meant. She added that she should always stand in awe of a person who had had such a thing happen to him; and then she pressed the arm on which she hung, and giggled; and the next moment she shrieked. There had been a sudden, violent wrench and shock; her cry was answered, after a moment's deathly silence, by a confused clamour from all parts of the ship; and the passengers came rushing up from below, where they had been playing

euchre, and singing hymns, and eating bacon and Welsh-rabbit, and implored one another to say what had happened. According to usage everywhere in cases of accident, there was no authority to turn to for information; the officers of the ship were each about his duty, and they severally and collectively underwent severe criticism from the passengers for their absence from the scene of the common dismay and curiosity.

Fenton was the first, in virtue of his office and mission, to learn that the ship had broken her shaft, and must put back to Yokohama. He received his sentence with desperate fortitude.

"I think we *might* get you back in time for the next boat," said the captain, considerate of the haste of a bearer of despatches, "but it would be only a chance. This is a sailing craft now. With a fair wind all the way, we might do it; but that 's almost too much to hope for. Of course we might meet the next boat on her way home before we make Yokohama, but that would be still more of a chance."

"Well, I must go back with you, that 's all," replied Fenton.

"Yes, there 's nothing else for it, that I see."

The passengers in the saloon were divided between two minds, and inclined in about equal numbers to hold a service of song and thanksgiving for their delivery from danger, and to organise an indignation meeting for the adoption of resolutions condemning the captain for snubbing a committee of inquiry, which had presented a just interrogation as to his

purposes, in view of the accident. It appeared, from the best informed, that the captain had at once put his ship about, not only without consulting the passengers' wishes, but evidently without considering whether it was not quite as feasible to push on to San Francisco as to return to Yokohama. There were attempts to commit some of the stewards to the former hypothesis.

About noon the next day, the captain spoke a ship, which, under a full press of canvas, was making speed eastward that mocked the laggard reluctance of the steamer on her backward course. She proved to be the clipper Meteor, bound for San Francisco, for a freight of wheat to Europe. The captain invited Fenton on to the bridge.

"There 's your chance," he said, "if you want to risk it. But you must be quick about it."

"How much of a chance is it?" asked Fenton.

"Those clippers often make very quick runs. She's bound straight for where you want to go. I can't advise, and I don't know whether they 'll take you."

"I 'll risk it!" said Fenton. If he had been given more time to hesitate he might have refused the risk; but he was not given the time. He scratched a line to Helen, telling her what had happened, for the captain of the steamer to post in Yokohama when he got back, so that she might have some intelligence of him in case of further delay; but, when he had finished his letter, he decided that it would distress her with needless anxiety if it reached her before his arrival, and that

it would in all probability come after him; and so he put it into his pocket, instead of giving it to the captain. In the meantime, there was further unintelligible parley with the clipper; she shortened sail and hove-to, and before the other passengers had well realised the fact, Fenton and his baggage were in the boat which the steamer had lowered, and was rising and sinking on the long swells that stretched between her and the other ship. Mrs. Bowers had parted from him with effusion: "I know you 'll find her alive and well," she whispered in generous sympathy; and he volunteered to look Mr. Bowers up in San Francisco, and tell him all about everything.

The other passengers received the adieux which he waved and bowed them, in that awe which Americans like to feel for any representative of the national dignity: we see so little of it. Fenton had put on his uniform to affect as powerfully as possible the imagination of the captain of the clipper, who was quite master to refuse him passage, after all; the captain of the steamer had not thought it best to make too plain his purpose in sending out a boat to the hasty stranger.

Both his precaution and Fenton's had been well taken. When Captain Rollins of the Meteor came to understand the reason why his ship had been stopped, he discharged a blast of profanity of a range that included nearly everything in animated nature, except Lieutenant Fenton, who stood sternly patient before him, until he should finish; perhaps it devoted

him the more terribly by this exception. When the captain stopped for breath, Fenton leaned over the rail, and motioned off the steamer's boat which lay rocking on the sea by the ship's side; he had taken the precaution to have his baggage brought on board with himself.

"I am bearer of despatches to Washington from the flag-ship at Hong-Kong. Of course, you expect to take me on to San Francisco, and I expect to pay you for the best quarters you can give me. I am Lieutenant Fenton of the Messasauga. What is your name?"

"Rollins," growled the captain.

"Here, my man," said Fenton to one of the seamen, "take these things to Captain Rollins's room."

The uniform and the secure bearing had their effect; few men knew just what is the quality and the authority of a bearer of despatches; the sailor obeyed, and the skipper submitted. He was by no means a bad fellow; he belonged to the old school of sea-captains, now almost as extinct as the pirates whose diction they inherited; his furious blasphemies were merely what in another man would have been some tacit reflections upon the vexatious nature of the case.

Fenton found himself neither uncomfortable nor really unwelcome on the Meteor. Upon the hint given him, the captain turned out of his room for the lieutenant, and he caused some distinct improvements to be made in the ship's fare. There were a number of Chinese in the steerage, and among the

passengers in the cabin a young American lady returning with her mother from a visit to her brother in China, and a man from Kankakee, Illinois, who had been out looking up the sorghum-culture in its native land. The sea-monotony which Fenton's coming had broken for the moment promptly returned upon this company. The young lady had not Mrs. Bowers's art of making attentions to herself appear an act of devotion to Helen, and Fenton offered her only the necessary politeness. What companionship he had was with the Kankakee man, a small, meagre, melancholy figure, full of an unembittered discouragement. Continual failure in life had apparently subdued him into acquiescence in whatever happened, without destroying his faith in the schemes he projected; he was disheartened with himself, not with them, and he had the gentleness of a timid nature which curiously appealed to the gentleness of Fenton's courage. He confessed that the first encounter between the lieutenant and the captain of the ship had given him apprehensions, and he insinuated a deep admiration for Fenton's behaviour in that difficult moment. He attached himself to the stronger man, and accepted him in detail with a simple devotion, which seemed to refer as much to Fenton's personal presence as to his moral qualities; and, in fact, the lieutenant was then a gallant figure. The oval of his regular face had been chiselled by his sickness into something impressively fine; with his good nose and mouth, his dark moustache and imperial, and his brown tint, he was that sort of young

American whom you might pronounce an Italian, before you had seen the American look in his grey eyes. His slight figure had a greater apparent height than it really attained.

"You see," explained the Kankakee man, whose named proved to be Giffen, "my idea was that if I could go right in among the Chinese people, and find out how the thing was carried on, and mebbe talk with some of their leading agriculturists about it, I could do more to get the sorghum culture going among us in six months than the agricultural department of Washington could in six years. It's bound to come. It won't come in my time, nor through anything I've done, but that sorghum interest is bound to be a big thing with us yet. We've got the climate, and we've got the soil for it. I'll allow I've had sorghum on the brain ever since I first saw it; but that's no reason I'm mistaken about it. I *know* it's got to come, and if I could have hit it the way I expected, I could have done more good, and made more money in two years after I got home than I'd known what to do with."

"And how was it you didn't hit it?" asked Fenton.

"Well, you see," said the Kankakee man, whose name was Giffen, "I found I couldn't talk the language, for *one* thing. And then I couldn't seem to get anybody interested. I *did* try to get into the country districts, but I couldn't make any great headway: such a prejudice against foreigners amongst the Chinese; and I hadn't very much money with me,

and I concluded to give it up. But I found out enough to know that our people can't grow sorghum on the Chinese plan and make it pay; labour's too dear and we've got to employ machinery. I've got the idea of a sorghum-planter, that, if I can get any one to take hold of it, is going to make *some*body's fortune. Have you ever been to Alaska?"

"No," said Fenton.

"They say there's good soil in Alaska, and there's nothing to prevent it's being a great agricultural country except the frost four or five feet down. Sun can't get at it on account of the moss. But you scrape that moss off once, and let the sun have a fair show for one summer,—well, I believe the thing can be done, if any one had the sense to go about it the right way. And I've got my eye on a kind of coffee they grow on the Sandwich Islands, that I believe can be introduced with us, if the right parties can be got to take hold of it."

The good weather continued for another week, with westerly winds that carried the Meteor on her course till she had made nearly three thousand miles since leaving Shanghai. Each day took him two hundred or two hundred and fifty nearer home, and Fenton looked forward to a prosperous run all the way to San Francisco with hopes that he dutifully disguised to himself as fears. Towards the end of the week, the wind began to haul back to the southward, and fell till it scarcely stirred a ripple on the sea, but he did not lose courage. He explained to the other passengers that they could afford to lose

a few days' time and still make one of the greatest runs on record. They heard him with the trust due a man of his experience and profession, and when the wind again sprang up in the west, they paid him the honours of a prophet with the idle zeal of people at sea, glad even of the distraction which respect for another's wisdom afforded them. But the wind suddenly backed from the west to the south, a strange yellow tinge spread over the purple sky, and faded to a dull grey, through which the sun burnt only the space of its rayless ball. The mercury fell, and the wind dropped again to a dead calm, from which it rose in sharp gusts that settled, as the day closed, into a heavy gale from the north-west. The ship drove before the storm for three days and nights. When the fourth morning broke she seemed to have been blown beyond its track; but one of her masts was gone; the sails hung in ribbons from the yards; the tangled and twisted shrouds swept her deck, and all but two of her boats had been carried away. The first observation possible since the storm began showed that she had been driven nearly a thousand miles to the south-east; but she was put upon her course again, and laboured on till night-fall. At nine o'clock the passengers huddled together in the cabin heard a cry of "Hard down your helm!" and the ship struck with a violence that threw them to the floor; then recoiling, she struck again, with a harsh, grating force, and ceased to move. In this instant of arrest Fenton found his feet, and scrambled to the deck.

The Meteor hung upon a coral reef, that defined itself under the starlight in the curving line of breakers on either hand. The seas swept over her where she lay on her beam-ends, and at every rush of the breakers she pounded heavily on the reef. Beyond it was a stretch of smoother water, from which seemed to rise a low irregular mass of rock, forming with the reef a rude quadrangle. There was no hope for the ship, and no hope for her people unless they could somehow reach this rock. It was useless to launch the boats in such a sea; they tried one, but it filled as soon as it touched the water, and nothing remained but to carry a line, if it could be done, to the island beyond the reef. The captain called for volunteers, but the men hung back. It was not the time to parley; Fenton passed one end of the line round his waist, and plunged into the gulf under the lee of the ship. When he reached the rock, he found that two sailors had followed him, and these now helped him to pull in the heavier line attached to the cord, which he had made fast to a point of the rock. A hauling rope was carried along this line, and in the glare of the lights burned on the ship, they began to bring her people away one by one. A sailor mounted into the sling running upon the rope, with a woman or child in his arms, and was hauled to the rock and back again to the ship; and all the women and children were set ashore, even some poor creatures among the Chinese, before any of the men were suffered to land. These followed, till none of the passengers but the China-

men were left. They stood huddled together at the bow, which had shifted round under the blows of the surf, and was hanging seaward, and the lights, burning now green, now crimson, now purple, showed them tossing their arms into the air, as if in some weird incantation, as they tried to free the wet joss-papers that clung to their fingers; their shrill supplications pierced through the roar of the breakers. The captain reported that he tried to make them understand how they were to reach the reef; but they would not or could not understand. He and his officers then flung themselves upon the line, straining under the seaward lapse of the wreck; and at the same moment the vessel parted amidships, and the bow where the Chinese were grouped weltered back with them into the sea. The lights died out, and the ship's bell, which had been tolling dismally as she pounded on the reef, suddenly ceased to sound. The broken hulk grew up once more in the dark, and the roar of the breakers rushed loud again upon the moment of horror that had been like a moment of silence.

When Fenton first touched the rock where all the survivors of the wreck were now gathered, it rose scarcely a foot above the water at the highest point, and by the time the captain reached it, they stood knee-deep in the rising tide. An hour after midnight it was high-tide, and it was only by holding fast to each other that they could keep their footing.

The moon broke from the clouds, and one of the sailors whipped out his knife, with a cry of "Look

out for yourselves!" and made a cut at something in the water. Fenton looked, and saw that the sea around them was full of sharks. He helped the captain form the men about the women and children, and they fought the fish away with cries, and thrusts of their knives, and blows of the splinters and fragments of the wreck which the breakers had flung them over the reef, till the tide turned, and the most hideous of their dangers had passed for the time.

With the first light of day came their first gleam of hope. One of the ship's boats, which must have been carried around the line of their reef, came floating to them, bottom up, on the refluent tide from the other quarter. It proved to be so little injured that the captain and some of his men were able to put off in it to the wreck, where they found tools for repairing it, and abundant stores. When they returned to the rock, they had a mast with its sail ready to be stepped, lying in the boat, and several pairs of mismated oars, which they had picked up outside. But it was the smallest of the boats, and the castaways counted each other with cruel eyes as it drew near. The rock where they stood was one of those dead atolls in which the Pacific abounds: a tiny coral isle, once tufted with palms, and gay with perpetual green, which the sinking of the ocean's floor had dropped below the tide, and left lurking there with its guardian reef, a menace and a deadly peril to navigation. Somewhere within a day's sail there must be other islands of kindred origin, but with a certain

area of dry and habitable land, which the boat might reach. But who should go, and who should wait her uncertain return? It was not a question of the women and children, nor of their husbands and fathers, but when all these had crowded into the boat, seven men remained upon the rock.

"Captain Rollins, there isn't room for us all in that boat," Fenton heard his voice saying: "I ask no man to share my risk, but I 'm going to stay here, for one."

"I don't ask any man to stay," said Captain Rollins. "I 've left sixteen thousand dollars in gold, —all I 've got in this world,—on the ship, so as to keep the boat as light as I could; but, as you say, lieutenant, she can't hold us all."

There was a little pause; then three sailors, with a shame-faced avoidance of Fenton's eye, pushed past him toward the boat.

One of the passengers—an Englishman—rose up. "My good men," he said, "you 're surely not coming."

"Yes, we are," replied one of them surlily. "Why shouldn't we come as well as you?"

"But the boat is too full *already!*" he expostulated. "You endanger the lives of the *passengers!*" he cried, with that respect for the rights of the travelling public which fills the Englishman when he writes to the *Times* of the inattention of the railway company's servants.

"Let the passengers get out, then," said the sailor. "*We* don't want 'em here." His joke raised a laugh among his fellows. "Come along, John; come along,

Jake," he called to the seamen who still remained with Fenton.

"No; guess not," said one of them quietly.

The matter-of-fact, every-day character of the details of the calamity, the unchanged nature of the actors in this tragedy of life and death, robbed it of reality to Fenton's sense, and made it like some crudely represented fiction of the theatre.

The figure of Giffen interposed itself between him and the captain who stood at the bow of the boat, in the act of offering his hand in farewell. "Excuse *me*," he said, answering Fenton's look, "I 'm going to stay. But I want Captain Rollins, if he gets back, to write to my brother, George Giffen, at Kankakee."

The harsh name, so grotesquely unrelated to anything that was there or then, awoke Fenton from his maze. Was there a world beyond these seas where there were towns and fields, chimneys and trees, the turmoil of streets, the quiet of firesides? His heart seemed to close upon itself, and stand still, as the image of Helen sewing beside the little table in the library, in the way he always saw her, possessed him. The next moment, this in its turn was the theatrical vision, and he was standing on a point of rock in a wilderness of waters, the boat at his feet, and the broken wreck upon the reef a stone's-cast away. He took from his breast the water-tight packet in which he carried his despatches, and wrote upon the back of one of them a line to Helen; with her address, and a request that it might be forwarded to her. "Here are some letters," he said, handing the packet to the

captain, with a light-headed sense of sending them to some one in another life.

"Why, bless you, man!" cried Captain Rollins, "I shall find land before night, and I shall be back for you here by this time to-morrow morning!"

"Yes, yes!" returned Fenton. "Don't stay, now," he added impatiently. "Good-bye."

The four men on the rock watched the boat till she showed so small in the distance that they could no longer be sure whether they saw her or not; then they turned their eyes upon each other. Whatever the two seamen left behind with Fenton may have thought of his looks, he could not congratulate himself upon theirs. But he said, "You are the men who followed me with the line last night."

"Yes, sir," answered one of them.

"You're not afraid, any way," said Fenton, as if this were the most that could be said for them.

"I guess we get along," said the man, "I rather be on this rock, than that boat, with so much people."

"What are you?" asked Fenton; for the man spoke with a certain accent and a foreigner's hesitation.

"I'm Fayal man; I live at Gloucester, Massachusetts; John Jones."

Fenton recognised the name under which most Portuguese sailors ship. "And who are you?" he asked of the other, who was as tall and fair as the Portuguese was dark and short.

He grinned, and the latter answered for him. "He don't speak much English. He's some Dutchman; Icelander, I guess."

"Very well," said Fenton. "You know where we are, and what the chances are."

"Yes, sir."

"I reckon," said Giffen, "we can make out to worry along somehow till the boat gets back." The sailors had begun to breakfast on the stores the boat had brought off from the wreck and left for them on the rock, and Giffen turned to with them.

"It won't do to count too much upon the boat's coming back," replied Fenton, suddenly hungry at sight of the others eating. "They may find land before night, and they may not find it for two weeks. At any rate, the sharks will be back before they are."

Giffen's jaw dropped, with a large morsel bulging his cheek.

"Come, man!" cried Fenton sharply, "you'd better have crowded into the boat with the others, if you're sorry you stayed."

"I don't suppose I've got any great physical courage," said Giffen, in his slow weak voice. "But I'm not sorry I stayed. I'm ready to do whatever you say. I'm a born high-private, if ever there was one."

"I beg your pardon," Fenton began, ashamed of his petulant outburst.

"Oh, that's all right," said Giffen quietly. "But I'm in earnest, I'd rather follow some other man's luck, any time."

"I shall not ask you to do anything that I'm not ready to do myself," returned Fenton. "We must

get out to the wreck," he added, including the Portuguese, "and see what we can make of it. And the sooner we get to it the better."

"I'm ready," said the sailor, closing the clasp knife with which he had been eating; and the Icelander, who seemed to understand everything through him, pocketed his knife also.

They waded into the shoal water, and swam round the stern of the ship where it overhung the reef, and tried to board her. But there was no means of doing this, unless they passed the reef, and ventured into the sea beyond, where they knew the sharks were waiting. They returned to their rock, and began to gather up the pieces of shattered spars and planks, that the rising tide was bringing in, and with such odds and ends of cordage and rags of sail as clung to these fragments, they contrived a raft, on which they hoped to float out to the wreck when the tide turned once more. After the raft was finished and made fast to the rock, they climbed upon it, and, launching upon the ebb, drifted out through a break in the reef, and contrived to clamber up her broken timbers. They could see that this fragment of a ship must soon go to pieces, under the incessant blows of the waves; and Fenton and Giffen made all haste in their search for tools and materials to strengthen their float so that they might put to sea on it if the worst came to the worst. The sailors began ransacking the wreck with a purpose of their own, and in the end, they all owed their lives to the rapacity which left no part of the ship unsearched;

for it was the Portuguese who found wedged in among the shattered timbers of the hulk, where some caprice of the waves had lodged it, the boat that had foundered the night before. Every blow of the sea had driven it tighter into the ruin, and it was an hour's struggle in the dark, waist-deep in water, amid the bodies of the drowned Chinamen, and just within the line of the sharks that were preying upon them, before the boat could be cut out. When they pulled it up on the deck at last, it was in a condition that must have seemed desperate to less desperate men; but in this extremity Giffen developed the shiftiness of a dabbler in many trades, and his rude knack with the saw and hammer rendered the battered boat seaworthy. Fenton found a bag of flour, water-soaked without, but fresh and dry within; a few biscuit and some peas and beans, with which he provisioned her; and a shot gun, with a store of water-proof cartridges, with which he armed her. With Giffen's help he fashioned a mast out of one of the broken yards, and patched together a sail from the shreds and tatters of canvas hanging about it. The wreck was settling more and more deeply into the sea when they launched their boat at sunset, and returned to the rock where they made her fast.

The last man to come over the side of the ship was the Portuguese, who carried in either hand a buckskin bag.

"That 's Captain Rollins's money," said Fenton. "Take good care of it"

"All right. I look out for it," answered the sailor.

With the refluent tide the sharks came back again. The dead Chinamen came with them, and seemed to join in beleaguering the castaways, crouching in their boat, which pulled at her moorings, as if struggling to escape the horrors that hemmed them round. They had found no water on the wreck, and a consuming thirst parched them. When the morning broke it showed them the surf beating over the reef where the ship had hung, and the sea strewn with its fragments.

"We can't stay here," said Fenton. "We must find land for ourselves somewhere—and water."

"That 's so," admitted Giffen, with feeble acquiescence.

"I know they never come back for us," said the Portuguese. "I goin' tell you that, yesterday."

They cut their boat from her moorings, and ran lightly away before the breeze that carried them where it would.

The sky was again of the blue of the weather that had prospered the first weeks of the Meteor's voyage; again its vast arch was undimmed by a cloud from horizon to horizon; and it only darkened to a deeper blue, filled with large southern stars, when the sun dropped below the sea, and the swift tropical night closed round them.

The castaways, voyaging none of them knew where, and trusting for rescue to whatever chance of land or passing sail befriended them, with the danger

of tempest, and the certainty of starvation after a given time, before them, had already divided themselves into two camps, tacitly distrustful if not hostile; the sailors guarded between them the booty that they had brought from the wreck, and Fenton and Giffen watched by turns with the gun in their hands. But at daybreak, a common joy united them. On the edge of the sea a line of dark points printed itself against the sky, and, as they approached, these points rounded into tufts, and then opened into the feathery crests of cocoa palms, with broken stretches of delicious verdure between the stems. The long white wall beneath, that glistened in the rising sun, like a bank of snow, expanded into a smooth, sloping beach; the deep surf flashed and thundered along the outer reef; and then the little coral isle, encircling its slumbrous lagoon, took shape before their eyes. They tacked and wore to find a passage through the reef, and so, between the islets of the palm-belt, over smooth depths of delicate yellow and apple-green, they slipped into the still waters of the lake, and ran across to the white coral beach. They fell upon the sand, and scooped with their hands a hollow into which oozed a little water that they could drink; and then they kindled a fire with some matches that Giffen had brought from the wreck, and roasted the shell-fish the sailors found among the rocks.

"I think this goin' to be nice place, Cap'n," said the Portuguese, stretching himself face downwards on the clean sand, when he had eaten and drunken his

fill. "Plenty to eat, plenty to drink, nothin' to do. By-'n'-by some ship goin' to come here. We 're all right, heigh?"

The little brown-faced man lifted to Fenton's face his black eyes, sparkling like a rat's with the content of a full stomach.

The Icelander laughed as if he had understood his shipmate, and while the Portuguese luxuriously dropped off to sleep, he wandered away, leaving Fenton and Giffen to prospect for the best place to put the hut they must build. "I don't like the way those fellows take it, exactly," said the latter. "They let themselves up pretty easy when it comes to a question of work," he added, with a mild sense of injury in his tone.

But the Icelander returned after a while with a large turtle he had caught, and with his hat full of turtles' eggs, which he had found in the sand. The Fayal man, when he awoke, joined him in a second foraging expedition, and they came back laden with fish and birds. John Jones showed himself skilled in primitive methods of roasting and broiling on hot stones. He opened the bag of flour, and made a store of bread, which he baked in the ashes; and by the time Fenton and Giffen had finished the rude shelter they had been knocking together for the night, in the cocoa grove, he called them to a supper which a famine far less fastidious than theirs must have found delicious.

"Well, you *are* a cook," said Giffen, with the innate disrespect for his art, which our race feels.

"But you've got enough here for a regiment," he added, looking round on the store of provisions, cooked and uncooked, which was heaped up on the sand.

"Oh, plenty more where that come from," said the Portuguese. "They all good cold. I don't like cookin' to-morrow; want to eat and sleep for a week."

The Icelander had strayed away again, and they saw him climbing the palms, and strewing the earth beneath with cocoa-nuts. "Jake seems to be laying out for a week's rest too," said Giffen.

The Portuguese laughed at the joke. "You better take that money up to your house, Cap'n," he said to Fenton.

"Where is it?" asked Fenton.

The Portuguese showed the two bags, where he had placed them, in a tuft of grass.

Fenton hesitated a moment. "You can bring it up with you when you get through here," he said finally.

The Portuguese and his ship-mate came carrying up the provision to the hut, after Fenton and Giffen had stretched themselves on their beds of grass.

"Cap'n," he said, waking Fenton, "here's the money. What we goin' do with that boat?"

"Let her be where she is; nothing can happen to her," answered Fenton, heavy in heart and soul, and sodden with sleep, as he placed his hand on the bags the sailor had put down beside him.

"Yes," chuckled the Portuguese, "I guess nobody goin' steal her."

The sailors did not come into the hut; they began to build a shelter of their own, and the noise of their work followed Fenton into his sleep. He had watched for three days and nights; he could not rouse himself from the deathly slumber into which he dropped again in spite of a formless fear that beset him; but he woke toward morning, with this terror, which proved more potent than the fatigue that drugged him. The money was still there; the sailors were peacefully snoring in their hut; and Giffen lay asleep across the gun. He staggered down to look at the boat. It was safe where they had left it, and he returned to their shelter, where he watched an hour, as he thought; then he woke Giffen, and bidding him call him in his turn, when he could no longer keep awake, he fell asleep once more. It must have been his visit to the boat that suggested the dream which seemed to begin as soon as he closed his eyes. He dreamed that they were at sea again in the boat, and that they saw a sail in the offing, so near that those on board, who did not see them, must hear them if they united in one loud cry. They rose up together for the effort, but their voices died in a gasp on their lips. Fenton burst into a groan of despair.

"My *Lord!* what's the matter?" cried Giffen, shaking the dreamer. Fenton scrambled to his feet; the money-bags were still there, but the sailors were gone; he tore open the bags; they were filled with shells and sand. He rushed down to the beach; the boat had disappeared; on the horizon a sail,

no bigger than the petal of a flower, flickered and faded.

It was sunset, and they had slept through the night and the whole day.

Fenton turned a look on his fellow-captive, which Giffen met with a face of ghastly self-upbraiding. "My God," he said, "I fell asleep! I hated to wake you, and I fell asleep before I knew it!"

"It doesn't matter," replied Fenton, with the nerveless quiet of his despair. "Sooner or later, they meant to do it."

They turned blankly from the fact; it was days before they could confront it in speech; and then, with the conjecture that the sailors had set out in search of some inhabited land, where they could enjoy the spoil of the ship, their desertion remained incredible, unimaginable.

XII.

It has been intimated that Helen entered upon her new life at Mrs. Hewitt's with social preoccupations in her own favour which she was by no means prepared to surrender; and she did not think of yielding them, even in the abjectest moments of her failure and humiliation. In the interval of idleness that followed, she was again purely and simply a young lady, not attached by any sort of sympathy to the little boarding-house world, though she had always meant to treat it with consideration. But it is impossible that one who has been bred to be of no use should not feel an advantage over all those who have been bred to be of some use; and if for no other reason Helen must have confessed, wittingly and unwittingly, by a thousand little recoils and reserves, that her fellow-boarders and herself could never meet on a level. It was perfectly easy, however, to keep aloof. After the first necessary civilities with the Evanses, she only met them on the stairs or at the table, where the talk was mainly between Mr. Evans and Miss Root, the art-student. It

appeared from the casual confidences of the landlady that Miss Root was studying to be a painter, and that some of her work was beautiful. Mrs. Hewitt owned that she was no judge of painting, but she said that she knew what she liked. She told Helen also that Mr. Evans was one of the editors of *Saturday Afternoon*, a paper which she praised because she said it gave you the news about everybody, and kept you posted, so that you could tell just where they were and what they were doing, all the while; she believed that Mr. Evans was not connected with this admirable part of the paper: he wrote mostly about the theatres and the new books.

Helen was amused by some of his talk at the table; but she was not at all sure about the Evanses. She could not tell exactly why; one never can tell exactly why, especially if one is a lady. Mrs. Evans seemed well enough educated and well enough dressed; she had been abroad the usual term of years; she neither unduly sought nor repelled acquaintance; but from the first, Helen was painfully aware of not having heard of her; and one is equally uncertain of people of whom one has heard nothing, or heard too much. As soon as she learned what Mr. Evans's business was, she understood, of course, that they could never have been people that people knew; and, Were they not a little Bohemian? she asked, rather tepidly, one day, when an old friend of hers, whom she happened to meet, broke into effusive praise of them, on hearing that Helen was in the same house with them.

"My dear," said Miss Kingsbury, summing up in

a word the worst that a New England woman can say of a man, "he is *easy-going!* But he is *very* kind; and *she* is the salt of the earth."

"And some of the pepper?" suggested Helen.

"A little of the pepper, without doubt. But not a grain more than is good for him. He would be *nothing* without her," she added, in the superstition ladies love to cherish concerning the real headship of the family. "She makes up all her own things, and teaches that boy herself. And you have another person there who is really a character: Miss Root. If you see any of her work, you'll see that she is an *artist;* but you'll have to see a great deal of her before you find out that she's the best soul in the world. With her little time, and her little money, she does more *good!* She's *practical*, and she knows just how to help people that want to help themselves: poor girls, you know, trying to learn things, and get into occupations. And *so* rectangular she is!"

Miss Kingsbury ran off, professing an instant and pressing duty. "I'm coming to see you very soon. Good-bye, Helen dear! You know how I feel for you," she added tenderly.

Many other people, returning to town, looked Helen up, and left cards, and messages of friendly interest. She did not see any one that she could help seeing; she was doubly exiled by her bereavement and her poverty from the gay and prosperous world they belonged to; she knew that they were kind, and meant well, but she knew that henceforward she could have few interests in common with

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them. She was happiest when she was quite alone with her sorrow and with her love, which seemed to have sprung from it, and to be hallowed by it. Their transmutation gave her memories and her hopes a common sweetness, which was sometimes very strange; it seemed as if Robert were present with her when she thought of her father, and that her father came to share all her thoughts of Robert.

Her old life had otherwise almost wholly dropped away from her. After her return from Beverley, Margaret came often to see her, but the visits were a trial to Helen; and perhaps Margaret saw this, for she came at longer and longer intervals, and at last came no more. Helen supposed that she had taken a place, but waited patiently till she should reappear.

She spent a great part of each day in writing to Robert and thinking about him, and trying to contrive their common future, and she made over all her bonnets and dresses. She saved a good deal of money by not buying anything new for the winter, and after her benefaction to Mrs. Sullivan, she found that even with these economies, she had nothing to buy spring dresses. But that mattered very little; she had not cared, after she first put on black, to mark the degrees of mourning punctiliously; she had always dressed quietly, and now she could wear what she wore last year without treason to her grief. The trouble was that she would soon need money for other things, before any interest would be due from the money in Mr. Hibbard's hands, and she spent several days in trying to put into dignified

and self-respectful terms the demand she must make upon him for part of her capital. She felt rather silly about it, and the longing to do something to earn a little money for herself revived. At the bottom of her heart was the expectation, always disowned and silenced, that Robert would somehow soon return; she had told Mrs. Butler that she knew he would come back as soon as he got her letter; but after the first keen pang of disappointment and surprise with which she realised that he could not at once ask leave of absence, or resign without a sort of ignominy, she heroically accepted the fact of a prolonged separation. She had caused it, she said to herself, and she must bear it; she must do everything she could to help him bear it. She idealised him in his devotion to duty, and worshipped him as if he had been the first man to practise it. She was more than ever determined not to be a burden to him in any way; she determined to be a help to him, and she had planned a pretty scene in which she brought out a little hoard of earnings, in addition to her five thousand dollars, and put them into Robert's hand the day after their marriage. It would be doubly sweet to toil for Robert; in the meantime it was sweet to dream for him; and she had not yet decided how the sum she intended to bestow upon him was to be earned, when she found herself obliged to borrow of the future rather than able to lend to it. But she resolved all the more severely to replace with interest what she borrowed; she would not leave a

stone unturned; and she forced herself, in going to Mr. Hibbard's office, to pass the store where she had left her painted vases on sale six months before. She said to herself that they would be all in the window still; but when she dared to lift her eyes to it there were none. Then she said that they must have been taken out, and stuck away in some corner as too hopelessly ugly and unsaleable.

The proprietor of the store came forward with a smile of recognition, and of something more. "This is really a coincidence," he said. "We have just sold your vases, and I was beginning to wonder where I should send you the money; I find there is no address on the card you gave me."

He filliped her card with one hand against the other, and looked at her with friendly pleasure, while she stayed herself against a show-case with a faintness which he could not see.

"Sold them!" she whispered.

"Yes, all three. Mr. Trufitt was looking at them yesterday, and asked me who did them. This morning he called and took them."

"How dared he?" cried Helen in a tumult of indignation, none the less appalling because wholly unintelligible to the person of whom she made the demand. At the mere name of Trufitt a series of odious facts had flashed without sequence into her thought: his obtuse persistence in love; his baldness; his stinginess; the fit of his pantaloons; his spiritual aridity, and his physical knobbiness. She hardly knew for which of his qualities she disliked

him the most, but she recognised with perhaps superior disdain that after learning that the vases were her work, he had turned over for a whole day in his frugal mind the question of buying them. After presuming to think of owning her vases, he had also presumed to hesitate! It was intolerable.

"What right—" she began on the innocent means of the offence, but corrected herself so far as to ask instead, "*Why* did you tell him who did them?"

"Really," said her victim, with just pique, "I saw no reason why I shouldn't. You gave me no charges on that point, and I gave the matter no reflection. I seized the first chance that offered to sell them for you." He looked hurt and vexed; perhaps he had made his little romance about serving this very pretty young lady in her trouble and need.

Helen would not consider his kindness; in her own vexation she continued to treat him *de haut en bas*. "I can't allow him to keep my vases," she said. "You must send for them."

"The vases were on sale," returned the proprietor, "and I sold them in good faith. I can't ask them back."

"*I* will ask them back," said Helen grandly. "Good-morning." When she put her hand on the bell-pull at Mrs. Hewitt's, she remembered that the shopman had not given her the money for her vases, and that she had again left him without her address. This was some satisfaction, but it was not enough: she would not rest till she had her vases back again, and had broken them into a thousand pieces.

But she found that the first thing she must do was to write to the people who had sold them, and apologise for the strange return she had made for the interest they had taken in her, recognising the justice of their position and the absurdity of her own. It was not an easy note to write, but she contrived it at last, and that gave her courage to think how she should get her vases back from Mr. Trufitt, who had bought them, and had certainly a right to keep them. She knew why he had bought them, and this enraged her, but it did not help her; she felt that it would be putting herself in an asking attitude, however imperiously she demanded them again. If he yielded, it would be in grace to her; and he might refuse—very likely he would refuse. She had not decided in her own mind what she should do in this event, when she received a reply from Messrs. Pout & Lumley, enclosing Mr. Trufitt's money for her vases, less their commission. Messrs. Pout & Lumley regretted that their Mr. Lumley had not clearly understood Miss Harkness's wishes in regard to the vases she had left with them; but finding themselves unable to ask their return from the gentleman who purchased them, they had no course open to them but to send her the money for them.

Helen saw that she must have written her address at the top of her letter of apology, and that she must have seemed to them to have repented of her magnificent behaviour on another ground, and to have tacitly asked for the money.

She broke into a laugh at the hopeless complication.

"Really," she mused, "I don't know whether I 'd better be put into the Home for Little Wanderers or into the Insane Hospital," and for the present there seemed no safety but in entire inaction. She was so much abashed at the result of her yesterday's work, that she remained with Messrs. Pout & Lumley's letter in her hand, wondering when she should have courage to go out again and renew her attempt to see Mr. Hibbard. At first she thought she would write to him, but there seemed something fatal about her writing to people on business, and she hesitated. It was impossible to use this money of Mr. Trufitt's; she was quite clear as to that, and, with various little expenses, her money had dwindled to less than three dollars since her interview with Mrs. Sullivan. She let the morning slip away in her irresolution, and then she decided to put the whole affair off till the next day. She felt a comfort in the decision, merely as a decision, and she began to enjoy something like the peace of mind which moral strength brings. Perhaps the weather had something to do with her willingness to postpone any duty that must take her out of doors; it was a day that would scarcely have invited her to an errand of pleasure. For almost a week the weather had been relenting, and the warmth of yesterday had brought a tinge of life to the bare slopes of the Common, where for three months past the monumental dumpings of the icy streets had

dismally accumulated; and along the base of these heaps, a thin adventurous verdure showed itself, like that hardy vegetation which skirts the snow-line on the Alps. As Helen walked across the planking on her way to Mr. Hibbard's office, she had heard a blue-bird in the blue soft air high through the naked boughs of the elms, making querulous inquiry for the spring; and there had seemed a vernal respite even in the exasperation of the English sparrows. The frozen year, in fact, was awaking to consciousness, with secret pangs of resuscitation that now declared themselves in an easterly storm of peculiar spitefulness, driving against the umbrellas, which she saw ascending the narrow hillside street, in gusts that were filled from moment to moment with sleet and rain and snow.

In the little grate in her room the anthracite had thrown off its first gaseous malice, and now lay a core of brownish-red under a soft, lurid blur of flame; and she stood before it thinking to herself that, rather than go out in that weather, she would spend some of Mr. Trufitt's money, as she called it, and smiling faintly at the demoralisation which had succeeded her heroics, when some one rapped at her door. She turned away from the fire, where she had stood smoothing the front of her dress in the warmth, with a dreamy eye on the storm outside, and opened the door rather resentfully. Mrs. Hewitt was there with a card in her hand, which she had apparently preferred to bring in person, rather than send up by the general housework girl. Before she gave Helen

the card, she said, with a studied indifference of manner that might well have invited confidence—

"I heard him askin' for you, and I showed him into the parlour on the second floor, till I could find out whether you wanted to see company."

Mrs. Hewitt made her own inferences from the flush and then the pallor with which Helen received the card; and while Helen stood staring at it, she added suggestively, "Seemed to have some kind of a passel, or something, 't he brought with him in the carriage."

"Oh!" said Helen, as if this idle detail had clinched the matter, "then will you tell him, please, that I'll be down in a minute."

She hastily made a woman's imperceptible changes of hair and ribbon, and descended to the parlour, with her line of behaviour distinctly drawn in her mind. After a first impulse to refuse to see her visitor, and then a full recognition of the stupidity of such a thing, she saw that she must be frankly cordial. Mrs. Hewitt had hospitably put a match to the soft-coal fire laid in the grate, and it was now lustily snapping in the chilly air of the parlour; but Lord Rainford was not standing before it. He stood with his back to the door, with his hat in his hand, and his overcoat on, looking out into the storm, whose national peculiarities might well have interested him; he turned when Helen came in, and she greeted him with a welcome which she felt must have the same effect of being newly-kindled as the fire in the grate. He did not seem to notice this, but began a huddled

and confused explanation of his presence, as if it ought to be accounted for and justified upon special grounds. Helen pulled the wrap she had flung on tightly round her, and concealing the little shiver that the cold air struck through her, asked him to sit down.

"The fact is," he said, "that I was anxious to put this little parcel into your own hands, Miss Harkness, and to make sure that it had reached you in safety." He gave her the package he had been holding, and then offered to relieve her of it.

"Oh, thank you," said Helen, ignoring it as well as she could, while refusing to give it up. She had gathered from the fact that Lord Rainford would not have felt authorised to present himself to her at that moment, if he had not this commission from the Rays, that the Rays had sent her the parcel by him, and she began to unravel the maze, in which he was involving them both, by that clew. There had been something in what he said about London, and Nice, and Rome, and Alexandria; but whether he had been with her friends at any or all of these points, she had not made out.

"Where did you see the Rays last?" she asked. "Were the Butlers with them, or—"

Lord Rainford laughed. "Why, the fact is," he exclaimed, "I haven't seen them at all! They made no stop in England, through some change of plans."

"Yes, I know," said Helen.

"And later, I gave up my winter in Egypt. I found that I couldn't go up the Nile, and get back

in time,—in time for the visit I had intended to make to America; and—and I had decided to come to America, and—so I came!"

"Yes," said Helen, a little dazed still. She added, to gain time for reflection rather than to seek information, "And you are fond of the Atlantic in the middle of March?"

"It wasn't so bad. We'd a very good passage. I found myself so well here, last year, that I've been impatient ever since to come back."

"I'm glad America agrees with you," returned Helen vaguely.

"Why, I'm not here for my health, exactly," said Lord Rainford. "I'd some other objects, and Mr. Ray asked me to bring the little box from his wife for you."

"O yes, I understand! They sent it to you from Egypt."

"Precisely. I assure you it wasn't an easy matter to get it through your Custom House unopened."

"How *did* you manage? By bribery and corruption?"

"No. I won't say I wasn't tempted to try it. But I don't altogether like that sort of thing even in countries where they naturally expect it; and I couldn't feel that the inspector whose hands I fell into did quite expect it. I told him that it contained a present from one lady to another, and that I would rather deliver it unopened, if he could trust me to come back and pay the duty in case it proved

to be anything subject to duty. I gave him my card and address, and I did go so far as to offer to deposit a sum of money with him as surety."

"How very, very kind of you!" cried Helen, beginning to be charmed.

"Oh, not at all," said Lord Rainford, colouring a little. "I merely mentioned it because it led up to something that interested me. He looked at my card, and then he looked at me, and said, 'That it wasn't necessary between *gentlemen!*'"

Helen laughed at the man's diverting assumption of a community of feeling with Lord Rainford. "You must have been edified," she said, "with such an early example of American equality."

Lord Rainford looked rather mystified and a little troubled. "I don't know. I rather liked it, I believe," he said tentatively; as one does who has not been taken in quite the way he expected.

"You are easily pleased," cried Helen; and he seemed still more perplexed.

But as if he set these speeches down finally to some ironical intention in her, he went on: "He said I could 'take the box along,' and then he looked at the address on it, and said, 'Oh, 't 's all right! I know Miss Harkness.'"

"Who in the world could it have been?" wondered Helen. "I never dreamt that I had a friend at court—or the Custom-House."

Lord Rainford took out his pocket-book, and, to do this, he had to unbutton his overcoat. "Won't you lay off your coat?" asked Helen. "I believe

we shall not freeze to death here, now. The fire is really making an impression."

"Thank you," he said, obeying. "He gave me *his* card. I have it here somewhere. Ah, here it is!"

Helen received it and gazed at the name. "No!" she said, returning it with a shake of the head, "it doesn't throw any light on my acquaintance, and I don't exactly understand it."

"Perhaps it was some other lady of the same name."

"Perhaps. But I haven't asked you yet when you arrived; and that ought to have been the first question."

He seemed willing to evade it; but he said gravely that he had arrived that morning. "The fact is," he added, "I had them send the luggage to the hotel, and I—took the liberty of driving directly here."

"Why, this *is* zeal in stewardship!" cried Helen. She felt a girl's thrill of pleasure in it. To see Lord Rainford was like meeting an old friend; she had parted from the Rays and Butlers long since he had; but his coming on an errand from them seemed like news from them, and she found herself at home with him, and truly touched by his kindness. She had been too little abroad to consider whether she was behaving like an English girl under the circumstances, and she ended by behaving like an American girl. "Now, Lord Rainford," she said, "I'm going to do all I can to reward you, and if you were a woman you would feel very lavishly rewarded; I 'm going to open this box at once in your presence."

"I'm sure you're very good," said Lord Rainford.

She put the box on a little table near them, and "I hope it isn't the kind that opens with a screw-driver," she continued, breaking the line of barbaric seals which held the edge of the paper covering, and then coming to a second wrapper tied with an oriental cord of silk, for which she required the aid of Lord Rainford's penknife. "What a pity to break and cut such things!" she sighed.

"Why, I don't know," said the young man, not feeling the occidental strangeness to which the paper and the cord were poetry. "It's the way they put things up, there. I dare say their dragoman had it done at a bazaar."

"Their dragoman! At a bazaar!" cried Helen, and now he dimly sympathised with her mood, and said, "O yes! yes!" while she tore away wrapper after wrapper, vaguely fragrant of musk or sandal, and came at last to a box, inlaid with mother-of-pearl in the Persian fancy. She opened this, and found, under a note from Marian Ray, a set of gold jewelry,—ear-rings, bracelets and necklace rich in the colour of the unalloyed metal, and fascinating in their fantastic *naïveté* of design; as old as man, as young as childhood.

"Ah, yes," said Lord Rainford, smiling back her rapture in the trinkets. "Those goldsmith's things. They're very pretty. And it's amusing to see those fellows work. They set up their little forge in the street before their doors, and make the things you've ordered while you're waiting."

"And the high, white house-walls, and the yellow sun, and the purple shadows all round them?" cried Helen, dangling the necklace from her fingers.

"Well—ah—yes; you're quite right," said Lord Rainford. But he added conscientiously, "There isn't much sun, you know. The street is very narrow; and I don't know about the walls being white; they're apt to be coloured."

"Oh!" deeply sighed the girl, as she dropped the pretty things back into their box. "Marian has certainly outdone herself," she said, shutting the lid. She re-opened it, and took out the necklace again, and one by one the bracelets and the ear-rings, and stood absently regarding them, held a little way off, with her head on one side. She was thinking of the night before her father died, when she put on that silver filigree of Robert's, and she had forgotten the young man before her. He made a little movement that recalled her to herself. "Oh, I beg your pardon," she said softly. He had his hat in his hand, and she saw that he had taken up his overcoat. "Must you go? I can never thank you enough for all the trouble you have taken." She stopped, for she had a sudden difficulty. It seemed savagely inhospitable, after what Lord Rainford had done, in the way he had done it, not to attempt some sort of return. But she felt sure he must see at a glance that she was not in her own house: the bare spectacularity of the keeping; the meagre decoration of the mantelpiece and whatnot; the second-hand brown plush furniture; the fire, burning on the hearth, as in a scene set for some

home of virtuous poverty on the stage, must all be eloquent of a boarding-house, even to unpractised eyes; and Helen was in doubt what she ought to do under all the circumstances. She decided upon a bold, indefinite course, and asserted that they would see each other again before he left Boston.

"Thank you," he said. But he did not go. He looked vaguely round the room.

"Your umbrella?" she suggested, joining actively in the search.

"Ah, I don't think I brought one," he said speciously.

When he was gone, Helen put on the trinkets, and found them very becoming, though, as she frankly owned to her reflection in the glass, a dark girl would have carried them off better. "That comes," she mused, "from Marian's want of feeling for colour. I'm sure *she* chose them." She smiled a little superiority at the mirrored face, and then she started away from it in dismay. Of course Lord Rainford had hesitated in that way, because he promised the Customs' officer to come back and pay duty on the box; and she had not offered to let him take it, and he could not ask for it. There seemed no end to this day's *contretemps*. He had not given her his address, and there was no telling, after that sort of parting, when she should see him again, if she ever saw him again. She had placed him in a cruelly embarrassing position, for he had given his card to that Mr. Kimball. The name was inspiration; she could at least go to the Custom-House,

and pay the duty herself, and trust to some future chance of telling Lord Rainford that she had saved his honour with Mr. Kimball. Kimball! She only wondered that she should have remembered the name.

She had no idea where the Custom-House was, but she wrapped herself against the storm, and took a carriage at the nearest hack-stand. The janitor and messengers, who passed her from one to another in the Custom-House, were of opinion that Mr. Kimball was on duty in East Boston, but the last who asserted this immediately added, "Oh, here he is now!" and called after a figure retreating down a corridor, "Kimball! Here! You're wanted!" and Helen found herself, box in hand, confronted with her old friend, the policeman.

"Why, is it *you?*" she cried, as joyously as if she had met him in some foreign land.

"Well, I thought it must be you," he said, with the half-shy, half-jocose respect of that sort of Americans in the presence of a fashionable woman. It amuses them to see the women putting on style, as they would say; but they revere them as ladies all the same. Kimball touched his hat, and then pushed it back on his head in token of standing uncovered while they talked.

Helen could not wait till she had transacted her own business before she said, "But I thought you were a policeman!"

"Well, so I was the last time I saw you," returned Kimball. "I left the force about two months ago.

Got kind of sick of it myself, and my wife was always in a tew about the danger, and bein' out so much nights, and the new collector was a friend of mine, and he gave me this place," said Kimball briefly, putting the case into Helen's hands. "That fellow behave himself after that?"

"O yes," answered Helen, knowing that Kimball meant the hackman whom he had rebuked in her behalf; "he was very civil."

"I thought I could fetch him," said Kimball. "I don't know as anything, while I was on the force, done me so much good as a chance like that now and then." He dropped his eyes suggestively to the box in Helen's hands; but he did not otherwise manifest any consciousness of it, and he left Helen to take her own time to say how glad she was to see him again, and how grateful she had always been to him. When she arrived, in due course, at the box, he merely permitted himself a dry smile. "I told him I knew you," and this time Helen understood Lord Rainford, and not the hackman. "I knew it would be all right."

"It was very kind of you, Mr. Kimball, and it's only a chance that it wasn't all wrong. Lord Rainford told me all about it, and I forgot to let him have the box to bring back to you till after he had gone, and then I hurried off with it myself, at once. I couldn't endure that you should think for a moment he hadn't kept his word."

"Of course not," said Kimball sympathetically. "Full of diamonds?" he asked jokingly, as he

received it from her. He opened the lid, and then frowned regretfully at the trinkets. "Gold, do you suppose?"

"O yes, they must be gold," said Helen. "It's a present."

"Just so. And of course you don't know what they cost. Well, now, I'm sorry, Miss Harkness," said Kimball, with a deep-drawn sigh of reflection. "I guess I've got to have these things valued."

"Of course," said Helen, with a beating heart, at the bottom of which, perhaps, she accused the punctilious folly of forcing the jewels to official knowledge. She had her feminine limitations of conscience in regard to smuggling, and did not see *why* it could be wrong to bring in dutiable goods if the Customs' officers did not know it; she had come out of regard to Lord Rainford, and not at all from tenderness for the public revenue; and she had a sort of vague expectation that the Government would politely decline to levy any impost in recognition of her exemplary integrity. "You just sit here," said Kimball, finding her a chair which one of the messengers had temporarily vacated, "and I'll see about it for you. I'll be back in half a minute." He was gone much longer, and then he returned with an official paper in his hand, and a fallen countenance. "Well, I done everything I could, Miss Harkness," he said in strong disgust. He was a man who had enjoyed official consequence largely as a means of doing people unexpected favours, and he was deeply mortified at the turn this affair had

taken. "You've got to pay fourteen dollars and seventy-five cents on this box. I wouldn't say it to every one, and I shouldn't want it reported, but *I* think it's a regular swindle."

"O no," said Helen sweetly, but with a deep inward bitterness, and finding her pocket with that difficulty which ladies seem always to have, she found her pocket-book, and in it two dollars and a half. "I shall have to leave the box with you and come again," she said: after resolving to borrow Mr. Trufitt's money for the payment of possible but improbable duties, she had come away and left it at home in the letter enclosing it.

"No, take the box along," said Kimball, measurably consoled at this unexpected turn. "It's just the way with *my* wife. Never knows how much money she takes with her, and comes back with her bank-bills balled up into little balls like gun-wads, and her silver layin' round all over the bottom of her bag—what there is to *lay* round. *Never* gets home 'th more than sixty-two and a half cents. Don't you fret, Miss Harkness; *I'll* make it all right, and you can make it all right with *me*, *any* time."

He would not listen to Helen's protests, but forced the box back into her hands, and walked along the corridor to the vestibule with her, largely waiving each return of her self-reproach and gratitude, and at the door resolutely changing the subject, as he took a card from his waistcoat-pocket. "Lord *Rainford!* Curious chap. *Lord* Rainford! Don't know as I ever saw many lords before," he said with

Yankee caution. "Don't know as I ever saw *any*," he added with Yankee conscientiousness. He pondered the card with a sarcastic smile, as if amused that any fellow-creature should seriously call himself a lord, and then broke out in a sort of repentance: "Well, he's a *gentleman*, I *guess*. Had his declaration made out fair and square, and opened up all his traps, first off, like a man. *Forced* 'em on to your notice, as you may say. No hangin' back about *him*. Well!" he added, after a final inspection of the card, "it *wa'n't* quite regular, as you may say, to let him take the box along without openin' it; but a man has *some* discretion, I suppose; and—well, the fact is, I took a fancy to the fellow. Seemed kind of *human*, after all."

"Oh, Mr. Kimball," cried Helen, deeply enjoying the inspector's condescension, but with a sudden superficial terror at the thought that she had not Lord Rainford's address, and should not know how to inform him that his word had been kept for him, "let me see his card, please!"

"Why, certainly, take it along," said Kimball. "Or I don't know," he added sheepishly. "I thought my wife might like to see it—kind of a novelty, you know."

"Oh, thank you! I don't want to keep it," said Helen, returning it after a swift glance. "I merely wanted to look at it. Thank you, ever so much!"

When she reached home she wrote two letters: one to Kimball, enclosing the money he had lent her, and another to Lord Rainford, telling him what she

had done. She felt that finally the whole affair was very funny, and she suffered herself to run into a sprightly little account of her adventure, which she tore up. She wrote it all out fully in the letter to Robert, to which she gave up the whole afternoon; but to Lord Rainford she merely said that she thought he would have been amused at Mr. Kimball's remarks.

XIII.

THE next day Lord Rainford came to acknowledge her note in person, and he excused himself for coming rather early on the ground of an intolerable impatience to know what Mr. Kimball had said.

"Oh, did I promise to tell you?" asked Helen, not well remembering just what she had written.

"No, I can't say that you did," said he with a candour which she began to see was unfailing. "But I thought, perhaps, you might."

"I'm not sure about that. But I was thinking that if you were disappointed when you were here before not to find any of us aggressively American, you might be consoled by studying Mr. Kimball; he's so absolutely and wholly American, that he takes every other condition of things as a sort of joke."

"Ah, yes," said Lord Rainford, "I understand. I think I observed something of the sort in that class of people. But I didn't meet it in—society." He looked at her inquiringly, as if he spoke under correction.

Helen laughed. "Oh, society has all been to Europe, and has lost the old American point of view —or thinks it has."

"Thinks it has?" he repeated with interest.

"Why, I mean that, with all that acquiescence which you found so monotonous, there wasn't one of those people—except a very few sophisticated instances—who looked at you at all as people in European society would. You were hopelessly improbable to them, no matter how hard they tried to realise you, as a—nobleman. Excuse me!" cried Helen, "I *didn't* intend to be personal!"

"Oh, not at all, not at all. It's very interesting, I'm sure. It's quite a new view of the matter. And *you*—"

"Now *you* are personal!"

"No, no, I don't mean that. Or, yes, perhaps I did."

"Well, then, even I, although I'm able to lecture so clearly and dispassionately about it, I'm not sure that I'm able to take the social state of Europe seriously, either."

"Really? I didn't find you such deeply-dyed democrats."

"We're not—in our opinions; you found that out; nor in our practice, I suppose. But in our traditions and— I've been talking so bookishly already—"

"Oh, it's quite what they told me to expect in Boston!"

"Then you *won't* mind my saying—in our *environment*," said Helen, with a laugh, "we are. For instance—and now I'm going to be horribly personal—as long as we supposed that Mr. Ray had introduced you as *Mr.* Rainford, you were real enough; but as

soon as we found that you were Lord Rainford, you vanished back into the stage-plays and the story-books."

"Oh, I'm very sorry," he said, with an accent of so much earnestness that she laughed again, and now with a mischievous pleasure, which he must have perceived: for he added more lightly, "It's really very uncomfortable, you know, to be going about as a fictitious character."

"You can't help it, and *we* can't," said Helen. "But I suppose if you were to live here a very long while, and were to be very, *very* good, we might begin to believe a little in your probability."

They talked of other matters, and she let her visitor go, with an uneasy misgiving which haunted her throughout the morning, and still lingered about her when Clara Kingsbury came later in the afternoon to beg her to lunch with her the next day.

"I know you've not been going out, but this will be an errand of charity. Last night I picked up, of all things in the world, a live lord, and before I knew it, I had asked him to lunch with me, and he had accepted. I suppose that lords are lunched very much like other mortals,—if lords *are* mortal—but really when he told me that he had met you, I was ready to weep on the first person's neck for joy. You *do* know him, don't you: Lord Rainford, whom you met last fall at the Butlers?"

"O yes," said Helen, "he brought me a message from them yesterday."

"How very odd!" cried Miss Kingsbury, "I wonder he didn't mention meeting you yesterday."

"He didn't mention going to lunch with you to-morrow," said Helen defensively, betraying the fact that she had seen him since.

Miss Kingsbury ignored it. "Then it must be his English reticence. How droll they *are!* I should think it would worry them to keep things on their minds the way they do. You *must* let me send the coupé for you! Lord Rainford, and Miss Harkness for the first time in many months, as the play-bills say: really, for a lunch in Lent—"

"Oh! I think you must excuse me, Clara," Helen began. "You know I *can't* meet people."

"I quite understand, dear," said Miss Kingsbury. "There are not going to be *people*, or I shouldn't have ventured to ask you. There are only to be Professor and Mrs. Fraser: Lord Rainford wanted especially to talk over Aztec antiquities with him, and I promised to get him to come. But I must have some other young lady besides myself; I can't let it be all Aztecs and antiquities. You must come to keep me in countenance, sitting up there behind the tea-pot like a—a—teocallis."

Helen laughed, and Clara immediately kissed her. If it were to be such a mild little affair, she felt that she could certainly go; she could see how Clara would hate to seem to have paired herself off with Lord Rainford, and she said, "Well, Clara, I will go; but I believe that, so far as Lord Rainford is con-

cerned, I shall go as an act of penance. He was here this morning again."

"Oh!" popped out of Miss Kingsbury's mouth.

"And I 'm afraid I said something inhospitable to him—something, at any rate, that I 'd like to do away the impression of."

"Oh! *do* tell me what it was, Helen dear! I 'm always saying such *hideous* things to people!"

Helen explained, and Miss Kingsbury silently reflected. "I suppose my joking about it annoyed him."

"What *did* he say?" pleaded Miss Kingsbury.

"He said it was very uncomfortable going about as a fictitious character."

"But you didn't *make* him a fictitious character, Helen!"

"No; but I can see how he might misunderstand—"

"They 're very sensitive," assented Miss Kingsbury, with a sigh. "Really," she continued more briskly, "for people who have gone tramping about the world ever since they could walk—and they began to walk *very* early—and crushing other people's feelings quite into the mire, they 're *extraordinarily* sensitive. One would think that they had always behaved themselves with the utmost delicacy and consideration, instead of scolding and criticising and advising wherever they went."

"Yes," said Helen. "But all that doesn't excuse *me*, if I said too much."

"Well, then," said Miss Kingsbury, "come and take

some of it back; or all. Tell him that the British aristocracy is the one only solid and saving fact of the universe! Good-bye, dear! Don't worry about it. I daresay he was delighted!"

Helen was afterwards sorry that they had not dressed a little more. She was necessarily in mourning, and Lord Rainford was dipped in the gloom of her crape, and of three black silks: Mrs. Fraser's best black silk, Miss Kingsbury's Vermont aunt's only black silk, and the black silk which Miss Kingsbury herself wore, in some mistaken ideal of simplicity. Helen longed to laugh, but remained unnaturally quiet.

Perhaps the black silks were too much for the Aztecs. Lord Rainford had the Englishman's stiffness, and Professor Fraser had the professor's stiffness; they seemed unable to get upon common ground, or to find each other's point of view. They became very polite and deferential, and ended by openly making nothing of each other. The Frasers were obliged to go early, and Helen shortly afterwards made a movement towards departure.

Miss Kingsbury laid imploring hands on her. "*Don't* go!" she tragically breathed. "Stay, and try to save the pieces!" and Helen magnanimously remained; under the circumstances it would have been inhuman to go. She brightened at Miss Kingsbury's imploring appeal; and they had a gay afternoon. When she said at last that now she really *must* go, she was scared to find that it was half-past four. She hurried on her sack and bonnet

and rubbers, and when she came down-stairs, Lord Rainford, of whom she had deliberately taken leave, was there, hospitably followed out of the drawing-room by Miss Kingsbury.

"I forgive your not taking the coupé," she said subtly, seizing Helen's hand for a grateful pressure at parting.

"I much prefer to walk, I assure you," said Helen, "after being mewed up in the house all day yesterday. Good-bye."

Miss Kingsbury's man opened the door, and Lord Rainford stood aside for Helen to pass out. But he hurried after her.

"If you 're walking, Miss Harkness," he said, with an obvious effort to continue the light strain in which they had been laughing and talking, "I really wish you 'd let me walk with you."

"Why, certainly," said Helen. "I shall be very glad."

But they walked away together rather soberly, as people do after a merry time indoors. There was a constraint on them both which Helen had to make a little effort to break. Whatever caused it on his part, on hers it was remotely vexation that she had allowed the afternoon to slip away without going to see Mr. Hibbard about her money. She must wait again till the morning.

"I 'm afraid," she said, "that you found Professor Fraser rather an unsatisfactory Aztec."

"O no. Not at all! He 's extremely well informed, I daresay. But we approach the subject

from very different points. He is interested mainly in the pottery, as the remains of an arrested indigenous civilisation; and I, as an amateur Egyptologist, was rather hoping to—ah—hear something new about the monuments—the architectural evidences. But the ground has been pretty thoroughly traversed in Mexico, and we can only look for fresh results now in Yucatan and Central America."

He hurried off the statement without apparent interest in the matter, and with something of present impatience. The effect was to make Helen laugh a little, at which he seemed grateful.

"I suppose you have come over to look up the ground for yourself," she began; but he hastily interrupted.

"No, I can't say I came for that, exactly. I can't say I came for that. I should like extremely to see those things for myself; but I didn't come for that."

Helen was amused at his scrupulous insistence on the point, and had a mischievous temptation to ask him just why he *had* come, then; but she contented herself with saying, "I always wonder that English people care to come to America at all. I'm afraid that if we had Germany and Italy at our doors, we shouldn't care to cross the Atlantic for a run to Colorado and back."

"The Continent is rather an old story with us, you know. Of course the towns are a good deal alike here, after you leave Boston, and there is nothing to see in the usual sight-seeing way; but

the conditions are all new, and they 're interesting; yes, they 're interesting. But I can't say exactly—"

Helen felt a nervous inability to let him define, as he clearly intended, that it was not exactly the new conditions either that had brought him to America, and she turned a smiling face from the anguish of sincerity that was urging him on, and looked about her with the hope that something in their surroundings would suggest escape for them both.

"I suppose," she said, "that you know Boston very well by this time?"

"No, I don't know it very well," replied Lord Rainford. "But I believe I know something about this quarter of it. This is where your principal people live—professional people, and large merchants?"

"All sorts of people live everywhere, now," said Helen, with a little touch of her superiority; "and I can't say that Beacon Street is any better than Commonwealth Avenue. Papa was in the India trade," she continued, "and we lived just here in Beacon Steps." She remembered what Captain Butler had said of the India trade and its splendour, and she had a tender filial pride in speaking of it.

Lord Rainford had not caught the word. "In trade?" he repeated.

"His business was with Indian products of all sorts," Helen explained.

"Ah, yes," said Lord Rainford. He walked on in a silence which Helen did not heed particularly. He must have been pondering the complications of American society, through which he was walking

about the most exclusive quarter of Boston with the daughter of a person who had bartered beads and whisky to the aborigines for peltries; for, "Really," he said at last, "I didn't suppose there were enough of them left in this region to make it worth any one's while. But perhaps he carried on the business at a distance—in the West?"

They came to an involuntary pause together, in which they stared at each other. "What—*do* you mean?" cried Helen.

"Upon my word I don't know whether I ought to say," returned Lord Rainford.

"You didn't—you *didn't* suppose," Helen continued, "that papa traded with *our* Indians?" Lord Rainford's silence confessed his guilt, and she added with a severity which she could not mitigate, "Papa's business was with India; he sent out ships to Calcutta!"

"Oh—oh!" said her companion. "I beg your pardon."

Helen made a polite response, and began to talk of other things; but in her heart she was aware of not pardoning him in the least; and she had an unworthy satisfaction in leaving him in evident distress when they parted.

The next morning, at the earliest permissible hour, Mrs. Hewitt brought her his card, with a confidential impressiveness that vexed Helen almost to the point of asking Mrs. Hewitt to say that Miss Harkness was not well, and begged to be excused; but she repented of the intention before

it was formed, and went down to receive her guest.

She received him coldly, and his manner confessed the chill by an awkward constraint in the commonplaces that passed before he broke out abruptly with, "I 'm afraid I must have annoyed you, Miss Harkness. I 'm not ready—I don't suppose I 've any tact at all—but it would grieve me to think that I had misunderstood you yesterday in a way to vex you."

"Oh, don't speak of it!" cried Helen, with the generosity which his frankness evoked. "There was never anything of it, and now it 's *all* gone." She began to laugh at the droll side of his blunder, and she said, "I was afraid that I must have seemed very rude the other day, in openly reducing you to a fairy prince."

"No, I rather liked that," said Lord Rainford. "It interested me, and it explained some things. I 'm sure people get on better in the end by being frank."

"Oh," said Helen, "there 's nothing like frankness," and at the same moment she felt herself an intricate and inextricable coil of reservations.

"I think the Americans particularly like it," he suggested.

"We expect it," said Helen, with a subtlety which he missed.

He went on to say, with open joy in the restoration of their good understanding: "The distinctions you make in regard to different kinds of trade rather

puzzle me. I don't see why cotton-spinning should be any better than shoe-manufacturing; but I 'm told it is."

"Why, certainly," said Helen.

"But I don't *see* the 'certainly'!" he protested, with a laugh.

"Oh, but it is!" she explained.

"Ah," he returned, with the air of desisting, "it 's my defective education, I suppose. But if people go into trade at all, I don't see why they shouldn't go into one thing as well as another. It appears all the same to—us."

The little word slipped out; and neither of them thought of it at the time. He went away, happy in having made his peace; she parted from him with sufficient cordiality; and as soon as he was gone, this word by which he had unconsciously distinguished between them and classed her, began to rankle and to sting. When it came to herself, she had the national inability to accept classification, which seems such a right and wise arrangement to Europeans, and which some Americans uphold—till it comes to themselves.

She could not get rid of her resentment by asking herself what Lord Rainford's opinions and prejudices were to her, and resolving not to see him if he came again; and she was so hot with it, when she went out in the afternoon to Mr. Hibbard's office at last, that she must have seemed to the clerk, who told her he was not in, to have some matter of personal question with the delinquent lawyer.

She stopped a moment on her way home at the window of a picture-store, attracted by some jars of imitation faïence, and she went in to ask about them; the sight of them suddenly revived her belief that she could still do something of the kind, and spare herself the shame of encroaching upon her capital.

A gentleman turned round from looking at them on the inside of the window, and she confronted Lord Rainford. "Ah, Miss Harkness!" he said. "Was it you who were spell-bound outside there by these disagreeable shams?"

His words struck her new hopes dead. "They *are* ghastly," she said, with society hardness. Then Miss Root's words came involuntarily to her lips, "I pity the poor wretch that expects to live by painting and selling them." That door, she felt, was for ever closed against her, even if she starved on the outside. The shock brought the tears into her eyes behind her veil, and she remained staring at the fictitious faïence without seeing it.

"Frankly, now," said Lord Rainford, "don't you think that all effort in that direction is misdirected, and that the world was better before people set about prettifying it so much?"

"Frankly," said Helen hysterically, "I don't believe I like frankness as much as you do."

He laughed. "If you have ever decorated pottery, Miss Harkness, I take it all back."

"Oh, it isn't a question of that," said Helen breathlessly. "It 's a question of what else the poor girl, who probably did the things, shall turn to if she

stops doing them." She had a kind of dire satisfaction in dramatising her own desperation; and the satisfaction was not diminished by the fact that these ideas had come into her head since she had denounced frankness, to which they had no relation whatever. She had meant—if she meant anything by that denunciation—to punish him for the tone of his talk in the morning. She had not forgotten his patrician *us*. But the talk was now far from that, and he had not been punished.

"Ah," he said, with feeling that she respected in spite of her resentment, "I should be sorry if I seemed indifferent to that side of the question. It was only that I hadn't thought of it."

"I didn't mean that," she returned, with an aimlessness from which she thought to escape by asking, "Is there anything up-stairs?"

"Yes," he said; "a very beautiful picture—I fancy a very American picture."

"The two things ought to tempt me," said Helen, passing on as if to terminate their casual interview.

She mounted the thickly-carpeted stairs, which silenced the steps behind her; but she was not surprised to find the *portière* held back for her to enter the pretty little gallery, or to find Lord Rainford beside her, when she stood within. There was a gentleman there with his hat off, after our fashion in picture-galleries at home, and two suburban ladies with a multiplicity of small paper parcels, in awe-stricken whisper; but they all presently went out,

and left her alone with Lord Rainford before the painting.

A yellow light fell rich into an open space in the primeval New England forest, and revealed the tragedy of an arrest for witchcraft,—an old woman haled away in the distance by the officers, with her withered arms flung upward in prayer or imprecation; and in the foreground a young girl cowering at the door of the cabin, from which her mother has just been torn. The picture was an intense expression of the pathos of the fact, which seemed as wholly unrelated to canvas or pigment, in the painter's poetic treatment, as if it were his perfect dream of what he had meant to do.

"Yes!" said Helen, with a deep sigh of the impassioned admiration with which she always devoted her being for the moment to the book or picture she liked.

"One of your Boston painters?" asked the Englishman.

"*The* one," answered Helen, and she launched out in a fury of praise, while he continued attentive to her rather than to her words.

"I suppose you can't understand how it afflicts me," he said finally, "to find any of the errors and sufferings of Europe repeated here."

Helen laughed as people do at mysterious grievances. "Why, no; as far as such things are historical, I believe we're rather proud of them. They do something to satisfy the taste for the picturesque, though after all they're such a mere

morsel that we land in Europe perfectly ravenous."

"If they were all historical, I shouldn't mind," said the young man. "It was finding our current superstitions accepted here that surprised and disappointed me."

"You don't mean to tell me that you find any imperfections—domestic or foreign—in us *now?*"

"Ah, you get beyond my joking depth very soon," he protested. "I told you once that I was a serious person."

"I didn't believe you could be serious about it!"

"I was, I assure you. I suppose it was my habit of taking things very seriously that put me at odds with matters at home, and that puts me at odds with matters here, where I fancied that I might be rather more of the regular order."

"I don't understand," said Helen; and being curious, and being fatigued, she dropped into one of the chairs that the suburban ladies had vacated.

"I mean that this morning I was trying to express the feeling which has made me a sort of white crow among my own people, and which doesn't seem even credible here. I was very far indeed from wishing to imply disrespect for any sort of usefulness—which is the only thing I really respect in the world. Did you understand me to do so?"

"Not exactly that," said Helen, with a reserve which he must have seen was as yet inexpugnable.

"I daresay it was one of the misfortunes of my being a sickly boy, bred at home, apart from other

boys, and indulging himself in all sorts of fancies; but I used to imagine that in America our distinctions—criterions—didn't exist. When I began to know Americans, at home as well as here, it seemed to me that they were often rather more subservient—more eager to get on with people of rank, than Englishmen even. I confess it baffled me, and you 're the only American—if you 'll excuse my being so personal, as you say—who has at all explained it to me. I can see now how they may have a romantic—an historical—interest in knowing such people, and that they are not merely tuft-hunters in the ordinary sense."

Helen could not tell whether he was speaking in irony or in earnest; she dropped the glance she was lifting to his face, in a little fear of him.

"I daresay I 've been mistaken about other matters—appearances; and I 'm vexed that I should have said something this morning that I saw put me further than ever in the wrong with you. I assure you that I don't think better of myself for belonging to an order of things that I believe to be founded and perpetuated in ignorance and injustice. I would really rather have been one of the pilgrims who came over in the May-Blossom—"

"Flower," said Helen, helplessly correcting him.

"Flower—I beg your pardon—than one of the robbers who came over with the Conqueror!"

He seemed to think this a prodigious tribute; but Helen could not even make a murmur of grateful acceptance. Those radical ideas, in which he expected

her to sympathise, were ridiculous to her; she had always heard them laughed at, and she could not imagine how an Englishman of rank could entertain them, though she had heard that such Englishmen sometimes did, for a while. To hear him talking in that way made him seem not so much unnatural as impossible; it was so unexpected from him that she felt a little uneasy, as if he were not quite in his right mind; but she had so far a compassion for his mania that she could not find it in her heart to tell him that he had totally misconceived her, and he went on to explain further.

"And I was merely trying to say that I thought it odd in a society where you are all commoners together—"

"Commoners!" cried Helen, in astonished recognition of the fact.

He did not heed this effect in her, but went on—"That there should be any such distinctions as ours. I'll go further, and say that I thought it preposterous; and the other day, when I fell into that unaccountable blunder in regard to the India trade, I had no such feeling as you—as you—might have supposed. If I venture to speak of something that Mr. Ray let drop in one of his letters about your determination to trust to yourself and your own efforts, rather than accept any sort of dependence, it's because I wish to tell you how much I revere and—and—honour it. It only endeared you to me the more! Miss Harkness!" he cried, while she began to look about her with a

wild hope of escape, "it was for your sake that I came back!"

They were quite alone, and if it were to come to this, it might as well have come to it here as anywhere else: Helen realised the fact with a superficial satisfaction, following her superficial terror of the publicity of the place. "Ever since I first saw you—"

"Oh, don't say any more! Indeed, you mustn't! Didn't the Rays—didn't they tell you—"

"I haven't seen them. Before I went home I knew that your father's circumstances— But I beg you to do me at least the kindness to believe that it made no difference at all. God knows I never considered the circumstances or made them an instant's question."

"You are very kind, Lord Rainford; generous—but—"

"No. It pleased me to think you had nothing. I would rather have found you as I have than in the best house in your town. I don't like people of fashion at home; and when it comes to what is called position, or loss of it, here—"

Helen tried to interpose again, but he would not let her speak.

"What Ray told me only made me the more impatient to see you again, and to assure you—to tell you how wholly I sympathised with your—ideas; and to prove my sincerity in any way you choose. If you dislike going to England—and I could very well imagine you might, for some reasons—I will come here. It's indifferent to me where I live, so that I

honestly live out my opinions. I love you for what you are,—for your courage, your sincerity, your truth to yourself; and if you think that your having—your being—"

"Oh, it isn't that at all!" cried Helen piteously, compassionately. To a girl who had never dreamt of being loved for anything but herself, and in her quality of well-born and well-bred American, could not imagine herself less than the equal of princes, Lord Rainford's impassioned misconceptions contained as many offences as could have been put into as many words; but she forgave them all to the pain that she saw that she must inflict. He had misunderstood everything: all her assumptions of equality, on his own plane, had been thrown away upon him; she had only been his equal as he ordained it, and condescended to her level. But she could not be angry with him, since she was to crush him with the word she must speak. She had never forgiven herself for her reckless behaviour the first time they met; and now he must have taken all her kind sufferance, all her hospitable goodwill of the past week—which she had shown in atonement—as invitation for him to hope, even to expect. She hung her head, but she must stop him at once, and, "Oh! Lord Rainford," she murmured, "I 'm engaged!"

He turned very white. "I beg your pardon," he said, simply and quietly.

"I've been very greatly to blame from the beginning; I see it now, and I ought to have seen it before. But that first day, when I met you, I was very unhappy

—I hardly knew what I did; I 'm afraid I didn't care. I had driven away the dearest friend I had by my foolishness; and he had left me, hating me; it made me desperate! But it all came right very soon again; and it 's he— It 's cruel of me to be telling you this; but I want you to believe that I do prize your regard, and that since you 've been here this time, I 've only tried to do what I could to remove that first impression, and to—to—to— You *must* forgive me!"

"O yes," said the young man with a bewildered look.

"I *do* see how good you are, and I respect— Any girl might be proud and glad, if she were not bound—"

"Good-bye," said Lord Rainford abruptly. She took his hand in a clinging, pitying pressure; she would have liked to detain him, and say something more, to add those futilities with which women vainly seek to soften the blow they deal a man whom they value, but do not love. But the useless words would not come to her lips, and she must let him go without them.

XIV.

HELEN hurried home, and ran up to her room. She had thought she wanted to hide; but now she found that she wanted to walk, to run, to fly, to get into the open air again, to escape from herself somehow. She was frantic with the nervous access of which, now that Lord Rainford was gone, she had fallen the prey. She was pulling on her gloves, as she rushed down-stairs, and she almost ran over the servant, who was coming up with a card in her hand. She stopped short, and the girl gave her the card.

"For *me!*" she cried in wild exasperation. "I can't see anybody! Say that I 'm going out. I can't see *any* one!"

A little old gentleman, with his overcoat on, and his hat in his hand, who must have overheard her, came out of the reception-room, and stood between the foot of the stairs and the street-door.

"I wish to see you, Miss Harkness, on very important business."

"I can't see you now. I can't see *any* one! I don't know you, sir! Why do you come to me?" she demanded indignantly, and quivering with impatience.

"My name is Everton. I bought your father's house when it was sold last fall at auction, and I came to see you in regard to some circumstances connected with that purchase."

"I don't know anything about the circumstances," cried Helen. "You must wait till Captain Butler gets home."

"I was sure," said Mr. Everton, with insinuation that arrested her in spite of herself, "that you knew nothing of the circumstances, and from what I knew of your father, I felt certain that his daughter would like to know of them."

"Please tell me what you mean," said Helen, and with a glance at the gaping servant-girl she pushed open the reception-room door. Mr. Everton politely refused to enter first, and he softly closed the door when they were both within.

"It is simply this, Miss Harkness," said Mr. Everton, who had a small, hard neatness of speech, curiously corresponding to his small, hard neatness of person. "I have reason to believe—in fact, I have evidence—that I was the victim of a fraud on the part of the auctioneer; and that I was induced to outbid, by five or six thousand dollars, bids that were cried by the auctioneer, but that had never been made at all."

"I don't understand," faltered Helen.

Mr. Everton explained, but she shook her head.

"This is all a mystery to me. Why don't you wait till Captain Butler returns? Why do you come to me?" She suddenly added: "Or, no! I am *glad*

you came to me. I can't suffer any doubt to rest in your mind for an instant: if you have been wronged, that's quite enough. Thank you for coming." She rose with a splendour which seemed to increase her stature, and diminish Mr. Everton's. "I was just going out, and if you will come with me I will go at once to Mr. Hibbard's office with you. He has charge of my affairs in Captain Butler's absence. If there has been any mistake, I am sure that he will have it corrected immediately."

She started out with Mr. Everton at her side, and swept haughtily on for several squares. Then she found herself trembling. "I wish you would call a carriage, please," she said faintly.

When they arrived at Mr. Hibbard's office, Mr. Everton allowed her to pay for the carriage he had shared with her. She could not quell her excitement when she entered the lawyer's private room with him. "Mr. Hibbard," she began, in a key which she knew sounded hysterical, and which she despised, but was helpless to control, "Mr. Everton thinks that he was cheated in the purchase of our house; and I wish you to hear his story, please, and if it is so, I wish him to be righted, no matter what it costs."

"Sit down," said the lawyer. He placed a chair for Helen, and allowed Mr. Everton to find one for himself, and then waited for him to begin. Mr. Everton was not embarrassed. He behaved like a man secure of his right, and told his story over again, straight-

forwardly and clearly. Mr. Hibbard smiled so lightly and carelessly at the end, that Helen felt at once that it must be all rubbish, and that it would be perfectly easy for him to undeceive Mr. Everton.

"Why didn't you come to me directly with this story, Mr. Everton?" asked the lawyer.

"I don't know, Mr. Hibbard," returned the old man keenly, "that I'm obliged to account to you for my motives. I don't know but that I should have preferred to communicate with you through my lawyer, if it had not been for this young lady, who felt sure that you would see justice done."

The lawyer smiled at an assertion which was evidently not made to weigh with him. "*You* ought to know by this time, Mr. Everton, that justice is an affair of the Courts, and that lawyers look after their clients' interests."

"I don't want you to look after mine at the expense of justice, Mr. Hibbard," said Helen nervously, pulling herself back to the point from which she had lapsed at Mr. Hibbard's smile.

"We will try to do what is right," said the lawyer, in a way that made her feel rather silly. "But we won't do anything rashly because two romantic young people have decided that it is right without consulting any one else."

If Mr. Hibbard expected Mr. Everton to enjoy this joke he was mistaken. "I am quite willing," said the old gentleman grimly, "to leave the affair to the Courts."

"If I hadn't your word for that, Mr. Everton,"

returned the lawyer briskly, "I should doubt your willingness to do anything of the kind."

"Why?"

"Because you know as well as I do, that you have no case, that all your suspicions and impressions, and conjectures and hearsay, wouldn't amount to *that* in Court." The lawyer snapped his fingers. "You know very well that you went to Miss Harkness to fortify yourself at the expense of the weakness you hoped to find in her, and that you have done an irregular and ungentlemanly thing in annoying her with this matter. I am sorry to say it to so old a man as you. Did you expect to extort money from her? Probably you were surprised that she chose to consult me at all.—Miss Harkness, I advise you to go home, and think no more about this matter. There 's nothing of it!"

The lawyer rose, as if to end the interview, but Mr. Everton remained seated, looking through the papers of a long pocket-book he had taken from his coat, and unfolded upon his knee, and Helen remained seated too, fascinated by the old man's quiet self-possession.

"I have something here to show you," he said tranquilly, offering the lawyer the paper which he had found. "And I wish you to understand," he added, "that I am not here to be instructed as to the conduct of a gentleman, or to account for my conduct in any way. I prefer that you should not attempt to account for my possession of this paper; and if you ask me any questions in regard to

it, I shall not answer them. It is sufficient for you to consider whether it is worth while for you to go into Court against it. I was willing, and am still so, to spare the scandal attending such an affair in Court, but I am determined to have the sum out of which I have been defrauded."

The lawyer was reading the paper without apparent attention to what Mr. Everton was saying, but when he had gone through the paper again, he turned to Helen, and said reluctantly, "Miss Harkness, it's my duty to tell you what this paper is: it's a confession from the auctioneer that he did invent a series of bids by which he ran the price of the house up from thirty to thirty-five thousand dollars. I haven't the slightest idea that the case, if brought into Court, would be decided in Mr. Everton's favour on any such evidence as this; in fact, I think it would not be easy to bring the case into Court at all. But Mr. Everton hasn't obtained the paper for any such purpose. He has obtained it with a view of frightening you into the payment of a sum—I don't know what figure he has fixed on in his mind—to keep the matter still. Now, I advise you not to pay anything to keep it still—not a cent." He folded up the paper and handed it back to Mr. Everton, who put it into his pocket-book again.

"Will you let me see it, please?" said Helen gently. He gave her the paper, and she read it, and then restored it to him. After a while she said, "I am trying to think what papa would have done.

Wasn't Captain Butler at the auction—wouldn't he have suspected, if anything had gone wrong?"

"Yes, certainly," said the lawyer.

"And if he had had any misgivings—"

"He would have come to me with them, and I should have told him not to pay the slightest attention to them," said Mr. Hibbard promptly. "My dear Miss Harkness, the whole thing is preposterous. That fellow Mortimer is a scamp, but he isn't such a scamp as he professes to be. If Mr. Everton will excuse my frankness, I will say that I believe this is purely a financial transaction between himself and Mortimer. The fellow had heard of Mr. Everton's suspicions, and when he wanted money very badly, he went to him, and sold out—for a sum which Mr. Everton's delicacy would prevent him from naming; but probably something handsome, though Mortimer has been going to the dogs lately, and he may have sold out cheap."

Mr. Everton, having folded up his paper and put it back into his pocket-book, and restored that to his breast-pocket, rose, and buttoned his coat over it. "I'm sorry, Miss Harkness," he said, "that you haven't a better adviser. I can't expect you to act independently of him, and that's your misfortune. I knew your father, and he was a very honest man. Good-morning."

"He was too honest," cried the lawyer, "to make any difficulty about paying you your cut-throat usury."

"My loan came at a time, Miss Harkness, when

your father could get money nowhere else, and it saved him from bankruptcy. Good-afternoon."

He took no notice of the lawyer in quitting the room, and when he was gone the latter broke out with, "I hope he will press this to an issue! I think I could give him something to think of if I could get a chance at him in open Court. The old scoundrel, to come to *you* with this thing! But he knew better than to come to me *first*. I wonder he dared to come at all! Miss Harkness, don't be troubled about it; there 's nothing of it, I assure you; nothing that need give you a moment's anxiety as to the result. You may be absolutely certain that this is the end of the whole affair; he would never dare to go into Court with that paper in the world. It was given to him, you may rest satisfied, for the sole purpose of extorting money from us privately, and with the agreement—which Mortimer would know how to make perfectly safe for himself—that it was never to be used in any public or legal way. Mr. Everton has made his attempt, and has failed; that 's all. You 'll hear no more of it."

"Is it true," asked Helen gently, and with an entire absence of the lawyer's resentful excitement, "that he lent papa money when he could get it nowhere else?"

"In any ordinarily disastrous time your father could always have got money, Miss Harkness. But the time that Everton alluded to was one when it could be got only of usurers like himself. He made your father pay three or four times what any man

with a Christian conscience would have asked for it."

"And did it save papa from bankruptcy?"

"Everybody was in difficulties at that time; and—"

"Do you think," pursued Helen, as if it were a branch of the same inquiry, "that he really supposes the auctioneer cheated?"

"Very likely he had his suspicions. He 's full of all sorts of suspicions. I daresay he suspects that you and I were in collusion in regard to this matter, and prepared for him if he should ever come upon such an errand."

"Oh!" murmured Helen.

"Why should you worry yourself about it, Miss Harkness? As it was, he bought the house at a ruinously low figure, and it 's worth now a third more than he paid for it six months ago."

"But you don't think it is possible the auctioneer could have done such a thing?"

"Oh, possible—yes, but extremely improbable."

"It makes me unhappy, very unhappy," said Helen. "I can't bear to have any doubt about it. It seems a kind of stain on papa's memory."

"Bless my soul, my dear young lady!" cried the lawyer, "what has it to do with your father's memory?"

"Everything, if I don't see the wrong righted."

"But if there hasn't been any wrong?"

"Ah, that 's the worst: we can't find out. Mr. Hibbard, you never heard any one else express any

misgivings about the sale?" The lawyer shifted a little in his chair, and betrayed a fleeting uneasiness, which he tried to hide with a laugh. Helen was instantly upon him: "Oh, who *was* it?"

"I haven't admitted that it was anybody."

"But it was! You *must* tell me!"

"There 's no reason why I shouldn't. It was as innocent a person as yourself: it was Captain Butler!"

"Captain Butler!"

"And I can tell you, for your entire satisfaction, I hope, that he went to the auctioneer and laid his doubts before him, and the auctioneer solemnly assured him that the bids were all *bona fide*, just as he now solemnly assures Mr. Everton that they were fictitious. But Captain Butler was not so shrewd as Mr. Everton—he didn't make the auctioneer put himself in writing."

Helen pulled her veil over her face. "And is —is there no way of solving the doubt?" she made out to ask.

"There is no doubt to solve, in *my* mind," said Mr. Hibbard. "I advised Captain Butler to dismiss the matter altogether, as I now advise you. I tell you that you 've heard the last of Mr. Everton in this connection."

Helen did not answer. But presently she said, "Mr. Hibbard, I was going to come to you for some money. I understood from Captain Butler that you had charge of what was left for me, and that I could get it of you whenever I wanted it."

"Yes, certainly."

"In such sums as I like?"

The lawyer laughed. "In any sums short of the amount of Mr. Everton's claim."

Helen was daunted to find herself unmasked; but she only put on the bolder front. "But if I wish to pay that claim?"

"Then I should intervene, and say the claim did not exist."

"But if the money is mine?" she urged.

"If you insisted upon taking up all your money, I should, as Captain Butler's friend, and as the old friend of your father, refuse to let you have it, unless you explicitly promised me that you would not give it to Mr. Everton. For it would literally be giving it to him."

"And if I said that you had no right to refuse it? If I told you that I was of age, and that I was determined to have it without conditions?"

"Then I should make bold to defy you at any risk till I had laid the whole matter before Captain Butler, and heard from him in reply. Now, my dear Miss Harkness," said the lawyer, "I know just how you feel about this matter, and I want you to believe that if I thought it was just, I should not only be willing to have you pay Mr. Everton's claim, but should urge you to pay it, even if it beggared you."

"Would it—would it take *all* the money?" faltered Helen.

"Yes, all. But it isn't to be thought of; the whole thing's in the air; it's preposterous." The

lawyer went carefully and judicially into the whole case, and clearly explained the points and principles to Helen, who listened silently, and to all appearance with conviction. At the end he asked cheerfully, as he prepared to write a cheque, "And now, how much money shall I let you have to-day?"

"None!" said Helen, "I couldn't bear to touch it. I know that you feel as you say; and it seems as if you must be right. But if I spent a cent of that money I could never be happy again unless I knew absolutely that there was nothing in this claim."

The lawyer smiled despairingly. "But you never *can* know absolutely!"

"Then I will never touch the money."

"Really, really," cried the lawyer, "this is too bad. Do you want me to give you this money to throw into the street? I honestly believe that the first man who picked it up there would have as much right to it as Mr. Everton."

"Yes, but nobody *knows*," said Helen, rising. "I 'm sorry to give you all this trouble, and take up your time; and I wish that I needn't seem so obstinate and unreasonable; but indeed, indeed I can't help it."

"Confound the old rascal!" exclaimed Mr. Hibbard. "I wish I 'd indulged myself in kicking him out of doors. Miss Harkness, I 'll inquire into this matter, and in the meantime I 'll write to Captain Butler. Do you think that I can do more?"

"No."

"And now I shall be glad to give you any money on account."

"I can't take any," said Helen; "it would be quite the same thing. I never could pay it back, and if it turned out that it belonged to him, I should be either a beggar or a thief."

The lawyer gave a roar of expostulation. "But if you are out of money what will you do?"

"I have a little yet. Captain Butler supplied me with money before he went away, and I have still some of it left." This was true. She had been using what she called Mr. Trufitt's money, and she had a dollar and seventy-five cents left of the sum that Captain Butler had made her believe was hers.

The lawyer, on his part, forbore to explain that the money Captain Butler gave her must have been in anticipation of interest on the five thousand dollars he held for her. He only said, "But you will accept a loan from me?"

"No; I shouldn't feel that I was making any sacrifice then."

"But why, under heaven, *should* you make a sacrifice?" demanded the business man of the girl.

"I must—to feel true to myself," she answered; and something like this absurdity she repeated in answer to all his prayers and reasons, and went away empty-handed at the end.

XV.

THAT evening Helen tapped at Miss Root's door, and entered in response to the girl's invitation to "Come in!" When she showed herself within, "Oh, excuse me!" cried Miss Root, in the reedy note which ladies make when they have pins in their mouths. She had her lap full of sewing, and she obviously could not get up. "I thought it was Bridget."

"Bridget wouldn't be coming to you on my errand," said Helen with a bluntness which at once made its way with Miss Root.

"What *is* your errand?" she asked, taking three pins out of her mouth for the purpose.

"I must earn some money, somehow. I thought perhaps you could tell me—advise me—"

"I can tell you, but I can't advise you," said Miss Root, bending over her work, and treating Helen's extremity as one of the most natural things in life. "I earned money enough to come to Boston and study Art"— she pronounced it with the conventional capital rather disdainfully, as if she would have chosen a homelier expression if she could have thought of one—"by helpin' mother take boarders. We took

'em our summers, and I taught winters. That's the way *I* earned some money. But I suppose you don't want to take boarders."

Helen hardly knew how to interpret the gleam in Miss Root's eye. But, "No," she answered simply, "I shouldn't know how to do that."

"Well, neither do most of the boardin'-house keepers." She stopped here so definitively that Helen was obliged to take the word if the conversation was to go on.

"I thought," she faltered, "that perhaps you could tell me how to do something with my pencil that would sell. I can sketch a little."

"Yes," said Miss Root non-committally; "I remember."

"And it seems to me, that if I knew how to go about it, I ought to be able to turn the study I have given it to some account."

"I suppose," said Miss Root, "that it's for some charity."

"For some charity!" cried Helen. "No, indeed! it's for myself."

"Oh," said the other. "Then if I were you, I wouldn't throw my time away. You'll never succeed."

"I don't want to succeed—as an artist," retorted Helen with a little pique. "But I have really come to the point where I must either earn some money, or else borrow or beg it. There are plenty of people who would be ready to give it or lend it, but I can't let them, and I hoped that you might be able to tell me how to earn it."

Miss Root shook her head. "Of course, I like your spirit; it 's the right spirit; but I can't help you in that way. I've never sold a thing yet, and I don't know when I shall, if I ever shall. If I didn't love to paint, I should quit and go home by the first train. But I do love it, and I 'm goin' to stick to it till I begin to starve. I don't ever expect to get married—*that* was finished up long ago!—and mother's married again, and here I am without a chick or a child to trouble me, or trouble about me. But if I had a cat to keep, I shouldn't try to keep it on Art. Oh, I presume that after years and years, I can sell a picture, maybe; but I know painters in this city—*real artists*"—she put the words unsparingly, as with a conscience against letting Helen suppose herself for a moment anything of the kind—"that would be glad to give all they do for a regular income of a thousand dollars a year. If you 've a mind to paint gimcracks," she added, and this was the only way in which she deigned to acknowledge her privity to Helen's previous performance, "you can sell 'em if some simpleton sets the fashion of buying 'em, or if people know *you* did 'em. But I presume that ain't what you want."

"No, indeed," said Helen, shuddering at the thought of Mr. Trufitt, and helplessly loathing herself for being at that moment a pensioner on his bounty; "it would be better to starve."

"Or," pursued Miss Root, "you might teach drawing. People have to throw away their money somehow. But, if I understand, you don't want to

go to people that have money to throw away for that any more than the other thing."

"No," murmured Helen. She knew that Miss Root had at once divined that she had come to her instead of going to any friends of her former life because she did not choose to let them pity her, and help her to any sort of trivial work out of pity. In the girl's straightforward sincerity she felt the comfort that the feminine soul finds in the frankness of a man, and she subtly perceived that, for all her show of indifference, Cornelia liked her, and was touched by the advance she had made in coming to her. In fact, Miss Root prided herself on her large-mindedness, a quality which she applied more impartially to people about her than is generally done. Her liberality was not merely for people of her own origin and experience, but for others who had known better fortunes, and had lost them, or who had them still and were unhappy in them; and the severity which accompanied her large-mindedness began with herself, and extended only to envious and detracting spirits. If the secrets of Miss Root's soul could be unveiled, it would be seen that she had been obliged from the beginning to discipline herself into accepting Helen as worthy her esteem and regard, in spite of her beauty, her style, and her air of a finer world than Cornelia Root had known, except at a distance. The struggle was sharp, but it had ended in the interest of large-mindedness. When Mrs. Hewitt assumed, in Helen's absence from dinner, while she was lunching at Miss Kingsbury's, to be confidentially

speculative about the English lord who seemed to be coming to see Miss Harkness pretty often, and spending a good deal of time when he did come, and so tittered, Cornelia led off a generous opposition. "I don't know," she said, "how much a lord's time is worth; but if it ain't worth any more than some of the fellows' time that used to come flirtin' round with our summer boarders, I don't see how he could put it in much better. I guess he ain't after her fortune, any way; and *I* guess he ain't goin' to find much more of a lady anywhere. If he wants to marry her, I shan't object, even if they don't ask me to the weddin'. I shouldn't want much to marry a lord for my own pleasure; but I don't believe but what if Miss Harkness does she'll be a credit to him."

Cornelia had steadfastly set her face against knowing or caring anything about the affair, and such was now her discipline that she believed she could keep it up till the end, whenever that was. She had not only snubbed Mrs. Hewitt the day before, but this evening, when Helen early withdrew from tea, pale, and with the evidence of having passed a day of great nervous excitement, she refused even to enter into discussion of what Mr. Evans called the phenomena, in the light of philosophico-economic speculation.

"Here," he contended, "are a most interesting series of facts. I suppose that never, since the earliest settlement of Boston, has a member of the British aristocracy called three times, on three successive days, upon a young lady resident in a board-

ing-house, even of such acknowledged gentility as ours. If Mrs. Hewitt will excuse me, I will assume that it is not the merits of her establishment which have attracted him, but that he has been drawn here by that charm in Miss Harkness which we all feel. He knew her in other days—in better days—and nobly, and like a nobleman, he has sought her out in our humble midst—if that is a correct expression—and laid his coronet—if it is a coronet—which he keeps somewhere concealed about his person, at her feet. As no human girl of the American persuasion was ever known to refuse a lord, if she got the chance, the inference is irresistible that our noble friend was instantly accepted, and has already written home to have his ancestral halls whitewashed up for the reception of his bride."

"Well, you may twist it and you may turn it as much as you please, Mr. Evans, and call it philosophico-economic speculation, or anything you want to," returned Miss Root. "*I* call it gossip; and I never *did* gossip, and I never *will*. I don't care if she was goin' to marry twenty lords; it's none of my business. All I know is that she has behaved herself like a perfect lady ever since she 's been in the house."

"New Hampshire for ever!" cried Mr. Evans. "The granite ribs of your native State speak in every syllable, Miss Root. But you will acknowledge that you did hate her just a little, won't you, for her superiority to us all—which she can't conceal—and that you would recognise the hand of Providence in

the dispensation, if his lordship had jilted her to-day?"

"No, I wouldn't!" retorted Cornelia, all the more vehemently for her perception of the malicious truth in the insinuation.

"Why, that's exactly what my wife said, when I taxed her with the same thing. It *must* be so. Now don't," said her tormentor, as Cornelia rose from the table, "let her see any change in your manner because you think she's going to marry a lord."

It was the insinuation in this charge that made it extremely difficult for Cornelia Root to adjust her behaviour to the occasion: if Miss Harkness *was* going to marry that lord—and Cornelia Root was principled against inquiring—she was not going to make the slightest change, and yet she was aware that some extra internal stiffness, which she must be careful not to show, would be requisite for this uniformity. When it appeared from Helen's application that she could not be going to marry the lord, at least for the present, Cornelia had to guard against self-betrayal in a too precipitate relaxation. The note of despair in Helen's confession that she could not go to people to ask pupils for the same reason that she could not ask them to buy her gimcracks, touched Cornelia, or as she would have said, it made her feel for the girl. But feeling was the last thing, according to her belief, that any honest person ought to show. She was going to help her, but she was not going to let her see that she was capable of any such weakness as sympathy; and she had before her the difficult

task of treating Helen just as she would have treated a girl who had always been poor, and of not treating her any worse. "There are a good many things that women take up nowadays," she said, with an aspect of hard indifference. "Some of 'em learn telegraphin'—that must pay almost a cook's wages; some of 'em go into the hospitals, and learn to be professional nurses—that takes you about two years before you can get a certificate, and then it 's a killin' life; there are the public schools, but there are so few vacancies, and you have to wait and wait for months, even after you 're prepared."

She looked at Helen as if she thought that Helen was probably not prepared, and Helen shook her head assentingly. "No," she sighed, "I couldn't wait. But perhaps I shouldn't want to do anything for a great length of time," she said innocently, with the thought of Robert's return in her mind. "It might only be for a limited period."

"That 's what I supposed," said Miss Root. "That 's the great trouble. If a man takes a thing up, he takes it up for life, but if a woman takes it up, she takes it up till some fellow comes along and tells her to drop it. And then they 're always complainin' that they ain't paid as much as men are for the same work. I 'm not speakin' of you, Miss Harkness," she said, with a glance at Helen's face, "and I don't know whether I want to join in any cry that 'll take women's minds off of gettin' married. It 's the best thing *for* 'em, and it 's about all they 're fit for, most of 'em, and it 's nature: there 's no denyin' *that.*

But if women are to be helped along independent of men—and I never was such a fool as to say they were—why, it's a drawback. And so most of 'em that can't wait to prepare themselves for anything, because they don't expect to stick to anything, they turn book-agents, or sell some little paytented thing; or they try to get a situation in a store."

Cornelia began to sew furiously, as if in an exasperation with her sex, that she could not otherwise express. "And you may be sure," she said, after a silence, "that every one of 'em tries to do something better than she's fit for, and that she despises her work, and thinks she ain't paid half enough for it."

Helen did not heed this last outburst. She was trying, with a sickening chill at heart, to realise herself in the character of those resolute young women who had sometimes won a furtive access to her by asking at the door for Miss Harkness, and sending up their names as if they were acquaintances, and then suddenly developing their specimen copy of the book for which they were taking subscriptions, or the needle-threader or thimble-case, or convertible pen-wiper and boot-buttoner which they were selling. She could as little imagine herself behind the counter of a Washington Street fancy or variety store, standing all day in the hot, dry air, and shrilly piping "Ca-ish!" as she had heard those poor shop-girls doing, while they rapped on the counter with their pencils for the cash-boy, and munched a surreptitious lunch of crackers and chocolate creams. If it must come to this, she did not know what she should do.

She was as firm as ever that she would not touch the money in Mr. Hibbard's hands as long as the least doubt tainted it; but she began to be frightened at herself, and at the prospect before her.

"And is there—is there nothing else?" she asked, in a voice which she tried to make steady, and only succeeded in making almost as low as a whisper.

"O yes," said Miss Root; "there's the theatre."

Helen's heart gave a throb of hope. She used to play a good deal in private theatricals; she had acted a French monologue once, and she had taken a part in a German vaudeville; everybody had praised her, and she had unquestionably borne the palm from all her dramatic competitors. A brief but brilliant future dazzled before her: an actress who was evidently a lady, and carried the air and tone of good society with her on the stage; triumphs and gains in cities distant from Boston in an incognito strictly preserved; and then a sudden but inexorable retirement after a given time: it was easy work for Helen's lively fancy to contrive all this, with a shining amplification, as rapid and full as if she had dreamed it in sleep. "Yes?" she said with an interest which she could not at once forbid herself.

"I had a friend," pursued Miss Root, "a friend—well, she was a kind of connection,—and she came up to Boston the same time I did—*crazy* to go on the stage. She used to act in the school exhibitions, and I guess she got her head turned; anyway nothing else would do her. But she was *real* modest about it; they all are; she only wanted to play little

parts like Juliet, and Ophelia, and Lady Macbeth. Well, she went to a manager, and he was very kind and pleasant, and I guess he saw what a simple goose she was, and he told her he would let her have a chance to show what she could do, and he gave her a place in the ballet."

"In the ballet?" palpitated Helen. The colours had already begun to fade from her vision of histrionic success, and the crazy structure now trembled to its fall.

"She thought," resumed Cornelia, "just as I presume you do, that it was dancin'. She said she couldn't dance any; her folks had always been strict orthodox, and wouldn't let her learn; and he laughed and said most of the ballet never danced at all. She'd have to go on as a peasant, or something like that, with a lot of others, first off; and as soon as he could he'd give her a few words to say, and she could see how she got along. It wa'n't playing Ophelia exactly, but she was dead set on going on to the stage, and so she took up with his offer, and glad enough, and she got six dollars a week from the start."

"And has she ever—ever got on?" asked Helen faintly.

"Well, the only time I ever saw her was one night when she had the part of a page. I guess she must have been on the stage as much as a minute, and she said at least a dozen words. But I couldn't seem to stand it, to see any friend of mine up before all those people in boy's clothes; and she seemed

pretty long for a page, and kind of bony, and I went away after the first act; I was afraid she might come on again."

Helen smiled and shuddered; the idea of boy's clothes was final, even in a reverie, and she hung her head in innocent shame.

"Now," said Cornelia, with a keen glance at her abasement, and apparently convinced that she had brought her low enough, "if you really do want to do something, I can get you a chance to try."

Helen started. "In the theatre? Oh, I couldn't."

Cornelia laughed. "No, not in the theatre. But there 's a friend of mine—well, *he 's* a kind of a connection too—used to have a photograph saloon down in our place; used to have it on wheels, and get it dragged round from one village to another; and *he 's* got Boston-bit too; and so he 's come up, and he 's opened a gallery down in Hanover Street; well, it 's pretty *far* down. Well, he hain't got a very high class of custom, that 's a fact; and if he had he wouldn't have this work to do, I presume."

"What is it?" asked Helen.

"It 's colourin' photographs."

"O yes; I 've seen them," said Helen, remembering some examples of the art, hung aloft in oval frames, in country parlours, of which they were cherished ornaments.

"It ain't a very high kind of art," said Miss Root, as if she found something to reprove in Helen's tone, "but it ain't every one that can do it, low as it is."

"I 'm sure I don't depreciate it," returned Helen.

"*I* should be only too glad if you thought *I* could do it."

"I guess I can get you the chance to try," said Cornelia; and now, as if she wished to leave the subject and prevent the premature acknowledgments which she felt she had not yet earned, she unpinned her sewing from her knee, and stood up holding it at arm's-length from her.

"The trouble is," she mused aloud, "that you can't tell how it's going to hang, after *all* your worry."

"Why don't you let me drape it on you?" asked Helen.

Cornelia dropped the lifted arm, and let the skirt trail on the floor. "Well, if you *think*, Miss Harkness, that I've been hintin' round for anything of that kind!"

"I don't," said Helen. "Honestly! But I like to fit dresses. I used to help our cook with hers."

Cornelia Root had to discipline with uncommon severity the proud spirit that revolted at having the same hands drape its corporeal covering which had draped the person of an Irish cook. She subdued it, but it was not in human nature that she should yield gracefully. "I guess I better go to a dressmaker with it," she said. "I don't want to trouble you."

"It won't be any trouble, indeed," said Helen, taking the dress from her.

After fifteen minutes of lively discussion, of pinning back and pulling forward, and holding up and letting drop, during which Cornelia twisted her neck

half off, as she said, looking at her own back, she mounted a chair and surveyed herself in the glass. "Well, you *have* got a touch, Miss Harkness," she said.

"O yes," returned Helen simply. "I know that."

"Well, why in the world—" Cornelia began. But she checked herself.

"Why what?" asked Helen.

"Oh, nothing," returned Cornelia, with the outward *hauteur* which was apt to mark a spiritual struggle with her. "I'll see Zenas Pearson to-morrow about those photographs."

"That will be very kind of you," said Helen.

The next day Cornelia brought her three of the unsparing likenesses in which the art of photography sometimes unmasks its objects. One was a gentleman in what he would have called chin-whiskers, with his hair gathered in a puff over his forehead, and a gold watch-chain wandering across his bulging shirt-front. The other was a lady in middle life, with her small features losing themselves in the obese contour out of which her eyes looked over little cushions of fat. The gentleman was to be painted of a fair complexion, and the lady as a brunette. The third picture was the likeness of this lady's child, which was to be coloured in accordance with her present appearance in the spirit-life as reported by a writing-medium.

"I don't envy you the job, any," said Cornelia Root. "Zenas apologised for not havin' any place for you to work in his gallery, but I told him I guessed you 'd rather work a while at home first."

"O yes," murmured Helen, lost in a heart-sick contemplation of her subjects.

"He can allow you two dollars apiece for 'em. It 's better than nothin', and it ain't *much* better, and so I told him," said Cornelia.

"Oh, it 's quite enough; quite," returned Helen.

After her first despair, she resolved to be very faithful and conscientious in her work, and try to make the poor things look as well as she could. She had finished them all by the end of the week, but when Cornelia carried her work to Mr. Pearson, he was critical of it. "Of course," he said, "she 's done her best, and so far forth she 's earned her money; but anybody can see with half an eye that she ain't a natural artist. There ain't any *touch* about it."

"Good gracious, Zenas Pearson!" cried Cornelia. "Do you expect to get an *artist* to paint up those scarecrows of yours?"

She put Zenas down, but he offered her no more work, and she was too proud, in Helen's behalf, to ask for it. She was more deeply hurt and discouraged than Helen herself appeared. The latter, in fact, professed a sense of relief when Cornelia, with a blunt reluctance, owned the truth.

"I *couldn't* do any more, if he had given them to you for me. I know that I don't do them well, and they 're so hideous, that if I were the greatest artist in the world I couldn't help making them wooden and staring. I *must* try something else; and I 've been thinking—I 've been wondering—if I couldn't write something and sell it. Do you know any

people—women—who write for the magazines, or the newspapers, rather?"

"Well, I know one girl: she's an art-student, and she helps herself out by correspondin'; writes for two or three papers up-country, and out West; but I never saw any of her stuff, and I don't want to; for of all the *perfect* simpletons—!" Cornelia was expressively silent; she added thoughtfully: "Yes, I guess it must be pretty easy to do, if *that* girl can do it. I wonder I didn't think of it before. Why don't you ask that ridic'lous Mr. Evans? He's the literary editor of *Saturday Afternoon*, and I guess he could tell you all about it."

"I don't like to trouble him," said Helen.

"Well, *I* do, then," retorted Cornelia. "What's he here for?"

"I can't let you," said Helen, thoughtfully folding the dollar-bills that Cornelia had brought her. "This money will last a little while, and perhaps—perhaps," she concluded rather faintly, "I can think of something to do by the time it's gone. I know I'm very weak and silly," she said, lifting her suffused eyes to Cornelia's.

"Not at all!" cried Cornelia; and that evening she cornered Mr. Evans, as she said, and attacked him about some sort of newspaper work for a friend of hers.

He was sitting before his fire in a deep chair, with his feet on the hearth of the open soap-stone stove; Cornelia assailed him from a higher chair at a little distance. "Some young man you're trying

to help along?" he asked, smiling up into Cornelia's eyes.

"You know it ain't any young man!" cried the girl.

"Oh! You didn't say," returned Mr. Evans coolly. He asked presently, "Why does Miss Harkness want to write for the papers?"

"Mr. Evans! I think you're too bad! I never said it was Miss Harkness."

"But you won't say it isn't."

"I won't say anything about it. There! And if you can't give me any advice without askin' who it is—"

"Oh, that isn't necessary now. But what I *do* wish to ask, Miss Root—and I think you owe it to yourself to answer frankly—is simply this: are you sure that you are trying to befriend Miss Harkness from the highest motive?"

"Highest motive?" demanded Cornelia, whom such an appeal must always arrest. "What *does* the man mean?" She was on such terms of offence and defence with Mr. Evans, that she often cast aside all formalities of speech in dealing with him and came down to sincerities that seemed to afford him the purest delight.

"What do I mean? Why, I mean this—and a person who pretends to keep such a conscience as you do, always dusted off and ready for use in any emergency, ought to be able to answer without prevarication. Are you sure that you are not doing more to help this Miss Harkness because she is a

lady of fallen fortunes, than you would do for some poor girl who was struggling up, and trying to support inebriate parents, and pay a younger brother's way through college?" Cornelia opened her mouth to protest, but he hastened to prevent her. "Wait! Don't commit yourself! Are you sure that her being visited by a lord has nothing to do with your beneficent zeal? Are you sure that you are not indulging a native disposition to curry favour with worldlings and vanities, generally? Are you certain that at the best you are seeking anything better than the self-flattery that comes through the ability to patronise a social superior? I merely ask you to reflect."

These were precisely the doubts which Cornelia had already exorcised; but they all sprang into new life at the touch of the laughing malice that divined them.

"I declare," she said, "you are enough to provoke a saint!"

"I'm glad to see it," said Mr. Evans. "Now, I'm *not* a saint, and I can be frank and open about a great many things that I observe saints like to fight shy of. A saint—especially a female one—is about as difficult a party to bring to book as any I know. Now *I* don't mind acknowledging all these shameful motives which *you* feel that you must blink. *I* don't mind saying that the notion of throwing something in the way of a young lady who has moved in the first circles, and still associates with lords and ladies on equal terms, is quite intoxicating

to me, and that I will help you in this work with far more pleasure than if she were a mechanic's or farmer's daughter." He smiled at the rueful misgiving painted in Cornelia's countenance. "Come, Miss Root, what kind of newspaper work does your patrician *protégée* think she can do?"

"I don't know as I want to talk with you about it," said Cornelia. "You had no business to find out who it was."

"I know—I know. It was my fatal gift of divination. A random guess, and your own guilty soul did the rest. Well, go on, Miss Root. You know that you're not going to let a selfish pique interfere with an opportunity to do good—to one above us," he added.

"I should suppose," said Cornelia grimly, "that *you* would know a great deal better than I do what she'd best try. I presume she could do most any kind of writin'."

"That is the presumption in regard to all refined and cultivated people till they prove the contrary,—which they usually do at the first opportunity."

"I should think," pursued Cornelia, whose courage always rose in view of any but moral obstacles, "that she could write notices of books. Seems as if almost anybody could write *them*."

"Yes," assented the journalist. "It seems as if anybody *did* write the greater part of them." He took up some books from his tables. "Here are three novels, if she wants to try her hand on them,

and she can review the batch together. That is the way we do. There 's quite a range in these : one is an old writer of established fame, one has not quite proved himself yet, and one is unknown. You would naturally think that if such books are works of art they would go to people of experience and reflection for review, but that is a mistake : they go to people who can be the most flippant and impertinent about them, and we find, as a general rule, that the young ladies who write for us can be more flippant and impertinent than the young men." He laughed as he handed the books to Miss Root, and watched her face.

"If I could ever tell," she said, taking them from him, "how much you believed of what you said, it would be *one* satisfaction."

"No, no, that isn't it, Miss Root : what you would like to know is how much *you* believe of what I say. Very little, I imagine. The philanthropist's ability to reject any truth that tells against him—or her—is unbounded."

"Well," said Cornelia, "I don't know as I care, so long as you give her this chance."

"Oh, it 's perfectly safe : she 'll be sure to fail," said the editor. "Tell her I want the notices next week, sometime. In the meantime, *I* don't know who 's writing them."

He did not betray himself in any way during the ensuing week, and he left Cornelia unmolested with a secret which she did not know whether she ought or ought not to keep. Helen worked very hard at

the criticisms; she had it on her conscience to do them very fairly and justly, because when she had read the books carefully through she perceived for the first time how much thought and labour must go to the construction of even indifferent stories; and she felt that it would be a sin not to do justice to all this in the case of novels which were certainly not first-rate. She thought that she ought to be careful about her style, and not say anything in a slipshod or slovenly way. She wrote out her reviews in her neatest hand, and then she copied them all, so that there was not one blot or erasure. She determined that if Mr. Evans accepted them, Miss Root should tell him who had done them, for there were some points which she was doubtful about, and on which she would like his instruction. She was very simple and humble in the matter, and in her own mind looked up to the journalist in his professional quality with an awe that she had not hitherto felt for anything connected with *Saturday Afternoon*. Her father used sometimes to buy that paper, and send it to her when she was away from home, and she had read its social gossip with a high-minded disapproval of the entertainment it gave her. She never thought of looking at the notices of books in it, and when she first heard that Mr. Evans was connected with it she had resolved to be very careful what she said before him, and she had partly withdrawn from anything like intimacy with Mrs. Evans for that reason. It was very well for Clara Kingsbury; Clara Kingsbury was a kind of public character

herself, with her charities and enterprises, her Homes and her Fairs, which were always needing newspaper mention; but for Helen it was another affair. Even now, while the question of the acceptance of her work was pending, Helen asked herself whether she would like to have the Butlers know that she wrote for the *Saturday Afternoon*, and was quite sure that she would not. "If he should take them, and you tell him who did them, please ask Mr. Evans not to mention it to any one," she said in giving her manuscript to Cornelia Root, who had suffered everything in the guilty consciousness that he knew already who had done them.

"I ain't afraid," she said to Mr. Evans, in discharging herself of the business, "that you'll mention it; but if you *should* have to refuse them, and then if you should show out any way that *you* knew, it would about kill me."

"Rely upon me, Miss Root," returned the editor. "I have rejected such loads of young-lady literature, that I have become perfectly hardened, and never show out in any way that I know there are young ladies or literature in the world. Ah!" he added, carelessly opening the manuscript, "the bold, free hand of fashion; pages neatly pierced at the upper right-hand corner, and strung upon a narrow red ribbon with notched edges; faint odour of the young person's favourite perfume. Yes, this is the real thing!" He laughed in the way that Cornelia Root had more than once said she could *not* stand when talking with him about serious things.

She went out after leaving the manuscript with him in the morning, and shortly afterwards Helen received the card of Mr. Hibbard, who was waiting for her in the reception-room. It was rather a shock at first, and then she found a sort of relief in the second anxiety, as people do in playing one care off against the other. She said to herself, in putting her ear-rings in before the glass, that he must have heard from Captain Butler, and that if Captain Butler sided with Mr. Hibbard, she should not know what to do; she would have to yield, or at least let the whole matter rest till she had heard from Robert, to whom she had written all about it.

"Good-morning, Miss Harkness," said the lawyer, absently dropping her proffered hand, "I have a cablegram here from Captain Butler."

"Oh, I thought you must have," said Helen, in the pause which he suffered to take place before he went on, with a frown at the paper in his hand.

"He telegraphs me from Naples, in answer to my letter, and directs me to obey your wishes as to paying Mr. Everton's claim."

The lawyer lifted his eyes and looked into Helen's face, as if to wait her orders; and her heart sank. This was what she had been eager and urgent to do when they last met: it had seemed to her then that she could not rest till Mr. Everton's claim, just or unjust, was paid, since its existence involved a doubt of fraud. But, in fact, she had, not being able to help herself, rested very well, and she had begun to

hope that the doubt could be somehow cleared away without the cost of everything to her.

"Is that all he says?" she asked feebly.

"No; he says he will write." He handed her the despatch, which she mechanically read, and then twisted round her finger.

"What do you think, Mr. Hibbard?" she asked at last pitifully.

The lawyer must have seen so many people halt between their interest and their sense of abstract right, and gladly take advantage of any doubt in their own favour, that he could not have wondered at her hesitation. But he was obliged to say, "I can do nothing now but receive your instructions. I will contest the claim to the last, or I will pay it." He again explained the matter, and put the points clearly before her.

"And there must always be this doubt about it, even if we gained the case?" she asked.

"Always. Even if that scamp himself were to declare in our favour, and acknowledge that he had played upon Everton's suspicion, the doubt would remain."

"Then, I can't bear it! You must pay Mr. Everton!" cried Helen. "Anything, anything is better than living upon stolen money!" At the same time that she pronounced this heroic truth, which indeed came from her inmost heart, she burst into human tears for the loss of all that she could call her own.

"Miss Harkness," said the old lawyer, "I would

not let you do this—I would take the responsibility of disobeying you and Captain Butler both; but—but I must tell you that my inquiries into the matter have not been satisfactory. I have talked confidentially with several of the gentlemen who were present at the sale, and I find that they all carried away the impression that there was something queer about the bidding towards the last. Now, as I said before, I don't believe that Everton's understanding with Mortimer will ever allow him to press the question to an issue, and that you could rest legally secure in the possession of this money; but this, as I conceive, isn't the point with you."

"O no, no, no! And thank you, *thank* you, Mr. Hibbard, for letting me decide the matter—and thank God for helping me to decide it rightly—before you told me this. Whatever happens now, I shall have the consolation of knowing that I wasn't influenced by the fear of what people would think or say. I know that I should have been, but I know that I wasn't." She dried her eyes, and controlled her quivering lips. "Don't lose an instant, please, about paying him, and pay him every cent. And oughtn't I—oughtn't I—to say something, do something to show that I was sorry that he was kept out of the money so long?"

"I don't think Mr. Everton will care for that," said Mr. Hibbard. "The money is what he wants. I will pay it; and then what will you do, Miss Harkness? You were coming to me for money, you said; you mustn't allow any mistaken feeling—"

"O no, I won't."

"I am sure that Captain Butler will wish me to be your banker till he comes home."

"Yes, certainly; but I have a little money yet," said Helen, following Mr. Hibbard to the door.

XVI.

THE lawyer was mistaken in supposing that Mr. Everton cared for nothing in the affair except the money. He came that afternoon to make his acknowledgments to Helen, who felt it her duty to receive him when he called, and he showed himself capable of responding generously to her own action.

"I am well aware," he said, "that I owe this reparation to you, Miss Harkness, and I wished you to understand that I could appreciate your conduct. The original claim is now fully satisfied, but the interest on the money that I have been kept out of would have amounted during the past seven months to something like two hundred dollars—a little short of two hundred dollars. I have written to your attorney that we will say nothing about this sum, that we will consider it paid."

"Thank you," said Helen blankly. It was not, perhaps, that she was insensible to Mr. Everton's magnanimity, but just then she was studying his personal appearance with a strange fascination. She found something horrible in the neatness of this little old man's dress, in the smug freshness of his newly-shaven face, which had the puckered bloom

of an apple that hangs upon the tree far into the winter's cold, and even in the smoothness and cleanness of his conspicuous linen.

He returned her absent gaze, winking his little, red-lidded eyes. He presently said, "I have had to lay out a great deal of money on the house, and I thought this might as well go into the general account. The structure was very good, but there were many things that needed going over, the plumbing especially. I have had the plumbing put into perfect order. Mrs. Everton was very particular about it—the ladies are, I believe. I think you would be pleased to see the improvement."

"Yes," said Helen.

"I have had brass pipes put in nearly everywhere; Mrs. Everton had heard that they were very much superior, and I was willing to do anything to gratify her: she was very low at the time."

He coughed behind his hand, and Helen awoke from her daze to say gently, "Oh, I hope she's better."

"Thank you," returned the old man. "But she is dead."

"Oh!"

"Yes, she was so far gone that she could not be moved from our old house. I never expected she could, but I made the changes to please her, and she went over them all in the architect's plans. I spared no expense. I don't suppose," said Mr. Everton, with a sort of brisk appeal to Helen, "that you would know the place now: the old cornices all down, and fresh paint and paper everywhere."

Helen did not reply; but she looked at the man with a pathetic wonder, which he apparently did not feel.

"I think," he continued, with a certain insinuation, "it would interest you to see the changes."

"O no!" Helen broke out.

Mr. Everton looked at her and passed his tongue over his red lips, fringed with dry cuticle at their edges, in apparent perplexity. "I don't mean to say," he resumed, "that the general plan of the house is changed; that couldn't be done; Mrs. Everton saw that herself. In many respects she was a woman you could reason with. It was a great blow to lose her."

"It must have been," said Helen, relenting again; but wondering a little why Mr. Everton should speak to her of these matters.

He explained for himself. "Your burying your father such a short time before I buried Mrs. Everton —it seems a sort of coincidence, a kind of bond, as one may say, and makes me feel as if—as if—you could appreciate my feelings."

"I am sorry for you with all my heart," said Helen. "I didn't know," she added vaguely, "that you had met with any bereavement."

"Yes; she's dead," sighed the old man. "It isn't as if I were broken, or hadn't kept my health. I 'm as well as ever I was. And as strong. I'm as good for business as any two young men I know of. But it's when I come home from business that I feel it; that's where the rub comes in; it's lonely. Yes, it 's lonely."

"O yes," said Helen, surprised into sympathetic confidence by the simple words. "I often felt it in my father's case, especially towards the end, when he seemed to live so much in the recollection of the past, and I knew that I was scarcely any companionship for him."

"Your father," said Mr. Everton dryly, "was a much older man than I am, and he was all broken up before he died; I used to notice it. I don't believe," he went on, "but what you'd like the house as well as ever, if you saw it. I should be very sorry to think I'd done anything to it that you didn't like."

"It's very, very kind of you to say so, Mr. Everton." returned Helen cordially. "And you mustn't think at all about it. When I made up my mind to part with it, I made up my mind never to care what became of it."

"Well, that was the right spirit," said Mr. Everton.

"And if the changes you have made in it gratified your wife in her last days, I can only be glad of them. I shall always think of my old home as it used to be; if it were burned to the ground, it would remain there, just as I left it, as long as I live."

"Well, I'm pleased to hear you say so," said the old man. "I like to see a young lady sensible—"

"Oh, I'm not sensible," protested Helen; "but I like what you've done because you did it to gratify your wife in her last days; that makes it sacred."

"I was always on good terms with her," said the

widower; "and I always determined to wait a proper time, if I should want to marry again. But if you believe you 've found the right one, there 's no sense in waiting too long."

He looked inquiringly at Helen, who was somewhat mystified at the turn the conversation had taken. But she said politely, "O no."

"I should want you should like the house on your own account," he continued, still more irrelevantly.

"On my own account?" faltered Helen.

"Because I want it to be yours," cried the old man, with a sort of violence. "I appreciate the course you have taken in regard to the fraud that was practised upon me at the sale, and I say that you have acted nobly. Yes, nobly! And I should wish to give the house to you as a mark of—of—my esteem; that, and everything else I have. I 'm alone in the world, and nobody has any real claim on me, no matter what her *relations* may expect, and I will deed the house to you to-day, if you say so!"

It all seemed like a dream of romance to Helen; it was fabulous, it was incredible, it must be impossible. She began to think that the old man was insane, and involuntarily left her chair. But there was nothing abnormal about him, unless it was the repressed excitement in which he sat blinking at her, as he went on: "The house can be your home to-morrow—to-day, if you like. You have only to say the word." He seemed to form some sort of hope or expectation from her continued silence, and now he rose. "If you 're willing, there 's nobody to interfere, and I

should soon teach them to attend to their own business if they attempted it. My mind is as clear and my health is as good as ever it was, and I would do everything I could for you. I admire you, and I respect you. I think you have right principles, and that's a very important thing. I should be proud of you. To be sure, we haven't been much acquainted; and I suppose it's only reasonable you should want time to think it over. I'm in no hurry; though, as I said, my own mind is made up."

"I don't understand what you mean," gasped Helen. "What *do* you mean? Why should you give me your property? and why—"

Her eyes dwelt hopelessly upon his face, in which a smirk of cunning insinuation struggled with an anxious perplexity. He again passed his tongue over his dry, red lips, and then cleared his throat, and breathed hard: "I mean—all I have; not that house, but half-a-dozen houses, and everything I'm worth. I'm not afraid of what people would say. If we're both of one mind, the difference in age is nothing." At a sign of renewed impatience from Helen, he added desperately: "I want you to be my wife!"

She recoiled, with a shudder, and her teeth closed in a nervous paroxysm. "Oh!" she uttered, in abhorrence far beyond rejection; and, creeping softly by the wall to the door, with her eyes fixed warily upon him, as if he were some nightmare spider that might spring upon her, she vanished out of it, and fled up-stairs to her own room, where she bolted herself in.

The half-hour of self-loathing that she passed, with her burning face in her pillow, could not have been more cruel if what had happened were some shameful deed of her own. She searched her soul for cause of blame, but she could find nothing worse there than the consciousness of having suffered herself for one inappreciable instant to dream of her home coming back to her by the wild poetic chance which the old man's words had intimated. This point of time, fine and tenuous as it was, had been vast enough for her to paint a picture on, where she and Robert, dim figures of grateful reverence, had seemed piously to care for the declining years of their benefactor, and to comfort his childless solitude at their fireside. But the silly vision, for which she grieved and blushed, was innocent, as she felt even in the depths of her self-abasement, and the thought of it ended in the reaction through which she rose from the bed, and dashed off a letter commanding Mr. Hibbard to pay the interest on the money due Mr. Everton, to the last cent, and not to accept any sort of concession from him. But the horror of his offer survived, an incredible fact, which she could not reject. His age, in asking to mate itself with her youth, had seemed to dishonour both, and had become unspeakably ugly and revolting to her. She wondered what kind of young girl it could be that would marry an old man, and what he had seen in her that made him think she could be such a girl. Nothing, she was sure; and therefore this humiliation, when she was so blameless, must be her punishment for sins from the

consequence of which she had seemed to escape; for the way in which she had tortured Robert; for her flirting, as she did that first day, with Lord Rainford; for liking to be admired, and for, perhaps, trying to make people admire her. Yes, that must be it; and as soon as she had fitted the burden to her spirit, she rose up with strength to bear it. Whatever men have contrived to persuade themselves, in these latter days, as to the relations of cause and effect in the moral world, there are yet few women who do not like to find a reason for their sufferings in their sins, and they often seem still to experience the heroic satisfaction in their penalties, which nothing but the old-fashioned Christian's privity to the designs of Providence can give.

When Cornelia Root came home to tea she knocked at Helen's door, and passed in round the jamb a hand with which she produced the effect of rejecting all responsibility for the letter it conveyed. "I guess it 's from Mr. Evans," she said, refusing to look in. "*I* don't know what 's in it."

Helen was ready, in her penitence, almost to welcome the worst; but the envelope only conveyed a printed slip from the publishers of the *Saturday Afternoon*, in which they thanked her for her contribution, and begged to enclose their cheque in payment. She rapped in her turn at Miss Root's door. "Just to tell you the good news," she explained to Cornelia's inquiring face, while a laugh fluttered out of her throat, which just failed of being a sob. "They 've accepted them!" She escaped

again into her own room, before Cornelia could formulate that strictly truthful expression of her feelings without which she would not speak at all. She joined Helen a little later, and underwent the pangs of remorse in arranging with her to call on Mr. Evans that evening and confess the authorship of the reviews preparatory to asking his candid criticism and his advice about future work. Cornelia's heart smote her in the presence of Helen's unsuspicious rejoicings; she languished for the moment when she could own that Mr. Evans had wickedly divined their secret from the first, and she found no relief, but rather an added anguish in the skilful duplicity with which he received Helen's avowal.

He was alone when they knocked at his door, for Mrs. Evans was putting their boy to bed after the usual conflict with his entreaties and stratagems. "Is it possible?" he demanded with a radiant deceit. "Why, this is delightful, Miss Harkness. We are quite an æsthetic colony here, under Mrs. Hewitt's hospitable roof—with Miss Root's art-work and your literature and my journalism. Really!" He deepened Cornelia's sense of nefarious complicity by the smile aside which she could not reject. "Have you written much for publication?"

"I 'm afraid you must see that I haven't," said Helen, with a straightforward honesty that Cornelia felt ought to have made Mr. Evans ashamed of himself; "and I wished you to tell me just where I have failed in my work, and, if you will be so good, how I can improve it."

This seemed to Helen a perfectly simple and natural request, and she was not, perhaps, altogether without the feeling that Mr. Evans ought to be gratified at her approaching him for instruction.

"Well, there you set me rather a difficult task, Miss Harkness," he said evasively. "We usually expect the fact that we are willing to print a contribution to suffice as criticism in its favour."

"Yes," pursued Helen, "but you want beginners to do better and better, don't you? I'm not saying it to fish up a compliment from you; but I wish really and truly that you would tell me what my faults are. Please specify something," she said with an ingenuous sweetness which smote Cornelia to the soul, but which apparently glanced effectlessly from the editor's toughened spirit. He laughed, as if other ladies had said the like to him before. "Indeed, I shall not be hurt at anything you say!" cried Helen.

"It's a little academic," said the editor. "But that's a good fault. It had better be that than be smart."

"O yes! I detest smartness in everything." She wondered just what Mr. Evans meant by academic, but she did not like to ask, and she consoled herself by reflecting that he had said it was a good fault to be academic.

"I don't know," he continued, "that it is the best plan to tell the plots and explain the characters so fully as you've done; but that can be easily remedied."

"I see," said Helen. "It destroys the reader's interest in the story."

"Yes," assented the editor, "and in the review a little. And I don't think it's best to sum up very deliberately at the end, and to balance considerations so formally."

"No?" said Helen. She had thought it *was* well; and she began to wonder why it was not.

"But that part can be easily omitted. And I shouldn't quote from the book unless I could give something very significant or characteristic. Your sentences are a little long. And it is rather late in the day to open with an essay, however brief, on the general effect and tendency of fiction. I think I should always begin directly with the book in hand, and let those ideas come in incidentally."

"Yes, to be sure," said Helen eagerly.

Mr. Evans put down her manuscript, which he had taken up from the table, and added lightly, "I shall have to work it over a little before it goes to the printers, and then when you have it in the proof you will see what I've done, and get a better notion of what I mean than I could give you in words."

"Oh, thank you very much. That will be *so* kind of you!" exclaimed Helen. She added: "I was careful to write only on one side of the paper. I heard that the printers preferred it."

"Quite right," said Evans with a smile at this innocence. Cornelia Root felt the irony of it, but it was simply amiable to Helen. "They do, very

much. It 's beautiful copy. By the way, here is the *Afternoon* for this week, if you want to look it over. You 're one of us now, you know."

"Thank you, I shall be very glad of it," said Helen, taking the paper he offered her.

Mr. Evans seemed to have all his work about him, and she thought that she ought not to keep him any longer. She said good-night, but Cornelia lingered a little; she could not help it; she could not rest till she knew from the editor, taken alone and defenceless, whether he thought Helen would ever be able to help herself by writing, and she told him so in as many words.

"I saw you attempting to pierce my inmost soul all the time, Miss Root," said the editor. "And I tell you frankly, you won't get the truth out of *me*. Miss Harkness is a very cultivated young lady." He bent over her MS., which he had again drawn towards him. "She possesses a neat and polished style. I could imagine that in letter-writing she would have all the charm that tradition attributes to your sex in that art. In addressing the object of her affections"—Cornelia gave a start of indignant protest and disclaimer, which had no effect upon Mr. Evans, who went smoothly on—"she must be fascinating, and I have no doubt the fashionable friends to whom she describes our humble boarding-house *ménage* think she writes delightfully. But in appealing to the general reader through the medium of the public prints, Miss Harkness seems to think it advisable to present her ideas and im-

pressions in the desiccated form. Her review has all the fixed and immovable grace, all the cold and dignified slipperiness, of a literary exercise." He looked up, and laughed out his enjoyment of the righteous despair in Cornelia's face.

She dropped upon the corner of a chair. "She 's got to do something," she said.

"O no, she hasn't," returned Mr. Evans cheerily. "She hasn't kept her secret so well as you have, Miss Root; and yesterday a fashionable friend of hers stopped her coupé at the pavement, and called me up to the window to say that she was *so* glad I was giving Miss Harkness a chance to write for *Saturday Afternoon*, and was sure that I would find her very clever. She was always such a brilliant girl, and said such delightful things! Miss Kingsbury asked me if I didn't think it was dreadful, her having lost everything, and being thrown upon her own resources in this way, and I said I did; but I don't. And then Miss Kingsbury explained that of course she, and numerous other persons of wealth and respectability, would be only too glad to have Helen Harkness come and spend her days with them, but she could not bear the idea of dependence; and wasn't her trying to do something for herself splendid? And I said that I thought it was; but I don't. And Miss Kingsbury said she knew it would appeal to me, and I said that it did; but it doesn't. Why should it appeal to me,—why should I think it splendid that a healthy young woman refuses to be a loafer and a pauper? Why, under heaven, *shouldn't*

she do something for herself? The town is full of young women who are *obliged* to do something for themselves. That 's the kind of splendour that appeals to me—the involuntary kind,—like my own. Is it any worse for Miss Harkness to work for a living than for the tens of thousands of other girls who are doing it? You have worked for a living yourself, Miss Root. Do you want me to regard you as splendid?"

Cornelia examined her just spirit in silence for a moment. "It 's different with us," she answered, "because we were brought up to work. We never expected anything else, and it isn't so much of a hardship for us, as it is for a girl like her who is used to being taken care of, and never had to do or think for herself."

"Ah, my dear Miss Root, it is the princess in exile who appeals to us both! But is she more to be praised for refusing to eat the buttered roll of others' prosperity than the peasant-maids who have never had the chance of refusing?"

"She 's more to be pitied!"

"Right again, Miss Root! You are always right. By the way, why didn't you urge Miss Harkness to attempt something in art? Miss Kingsbury asked me if I couldn't get her some book to illustrate! She said that Miss Harkness's sketches were exquisite, and she asked me if I had ever seen any of them. Have you?"

"Yes," Cornelia reluctantly admitted.

"Well?"

"They 're hopeless!" cried Cornelia, with an involuntary vehemence that delighted Evans.

"And you thought that if she couldn't draw she could write! That was quite natural."

"It was her own idea," urged Cornelia.

"And it was your idea that she should write for me! Very good, very right, very like a philanthropist!"

"Now, you know well enough, Mr. Evans," began Cornelia, "that you were perfectly free to refuse Miss Harkness's writin'; and I ain't goin' to praise you up for takin' it, if that 's what you 're after."

"That 's what I'm after; but I knew I shouldn't get it before you told me. Who praises an editor for anything? You and Miss Kingsbury will only think I've done my duty when I've sat up till midnight putting this pretty rubbish into shape."

"Is it so bad as that?" asked Cornelia, aghast. "Why didn't you give it back to her, and tell her it was rubbish? It would have been the best for her in the end!"

"Because I have a timid and truckling spirit, Miss Root, and you know it. Because I have scarcely the heart to refuse the rubbish of ladies who tell me they have produced it in the interest of some worthy charity, or for the purpose of eking out their pin-money; and I 'm naturally helpless in the presence of a lady who has written it for bread—as I am given to understand." Cornelia was silent, and the editor continued gleefully: "A *woman* can sometimes do

something without damaging others. But when a *lady* undertakes to help herself, some man has to suffer for it; and why shouldn't I be the victim? I usually devote Saturday night to working on a little play I'm trying to write, but I daresay the time will be much better employed in rewriting Miss Harkness's reviews."

He watched the travail of Miss Root's soul in her honest eyes with a smile of unrelenting enjoyment. "Besides, I like to befriend gentility in adversity as well as you do, Miss Root. The thought that I am actually earning money, without her knowing it, for a young lady of Miss Harkness's condescension, does my mean and servile little soul more good than I can well describe."

Cornelia burst forth with a sort of groan, "Oh, it's all wrong, I know it is! But what *is* a girl fit for that's been brought up just as a lady? If there's anything under the sun that she can honestly do, without imposing upon other people, and putting them to twice the trouble she takes for herself, for goodness' sake, let her do it!"

"Very just sentiments; but what is it?"

"Well, one thing it *isn't;* and that's writing for the papers, and I shall tell her so!"

"You have no right to abuse my confidence, Miss Root," said the editor with superficial gravity, through which his laughter broke when she turned desperately upon him. "Miss Harkness's failure is my secret. If it *is* a failure. *I* supposed it was a shining success! There are very few young ladies

who can get editors to write their articles for them, and then let them pocket the proceeds."

"I should think," said Cornelia, "that you would be ashamed to make fun of everything the way you do. It seems as if you didn't have a morsel of compassion for the poor thing."

"Ah, there it is again! Accept her inefficiency and applaud her failure because you pity her! Do you think the ladies are ever going to do anything for themselves as long as the world is asked and expected to take that attitude? Did you tell her that she was an artist, and then work up her sketches for her? Have a morsel of compassion yourself, Miss Root! I'm going to have large masses of it. I'm going rewrite Miss Harkness's whole review!"

His laugh followed Cornelia as she climbed the stairs in slow and heavy perplexity to her room.

Helen in her room was light-heartedly writing to Robert, and telling him that though she had now absolutely nothing in the world, she had never felt so happy since her father died, for now she had found at last that she could do something and be of some use. She could not grieve, even for his sake, for the loss of the money paid back to Mr. Everton; the thought of it now was such a perfect horror. She said that some time she should tell him why, but not now; and she turned from the odious subject to describe her interview with Mr. Evans, who had been so frankly kind and encouraging. She had not said anything to Robert about Lord Rainford yet, and she wondered whether she ought. Some

time, of course, she must do so; but she was afraid it might be difficult to make the whole affair clear to Robert at that distance. It was something that could be much better spoken than written; she resolved at least to leave her letter open till morning, and decide then what she should do.

She was not sleepy, but she felt a pleasant languor, such as comes after the fortunate close of a period of strong excitements, and she sat down before the fire, which was giving out its last delicious glow, to indulge her fatigue a little more luxuriously. She looked back over what had happened during the week with satisfaction, now that it was past; she was glad not only that she had paid that horrible old man his money, but that she had been right, and not, as she had sometimes feared, morbid and conceited about wishing him to be paid. She felt that she had behaved in a sensible and business-like manner; that Captain Butler's action proved this; and that all the events sustained her in her first instinctive impulse. At this safe removal in time and space, Mr. Everton's proposal did not seem so simply horrible; it began to reveal some amusing aspects; she broke into a little murmur of laughter when she thought of certain moments of perplexity for him.

As for the money, it was a little matter: it was five thousand dollars in the abstract, but in reality it was only six dollars a week; and with the prospect of literary work from Mr. Evans, and perhaps other editors, she could easily make that up: she had earned ten dollars by her pen already.

She unfolded the paper that Mr. Evans had given her, and the crepitation of its leaves sent a light shiver through her. What would the Butlers say when she sent them the next number with her reviews marked in it? She knew from her own fine reluctance that it would surprise them disagreeably; and she fancied Jessie Butler supporting, and Mrs. Butler forgiving, while Marian Ray denounced her new attempt. But, she reflected, she would often have to disagree with Marian Ray; and whatever people said of the society gossip in the *Saturday Afternoon*, it was a good literary paper; everybody acknowledged that. She heard herself defending it to Marian, and, in the rapid process of reverie, it had come to her saying plainly to Marian that she saw no disgrace in writing for the newspapers, and that the only disgrace could be in writing dishonestly and vulgarly for them. She had said she had Clara Kingsbury's approval, and Marian had laughed and answered, "Oh, if she had *Clara Kingsbury's* approval!" and had retreated again to Naples; for Helen now had the newspaper quite open, and was looking for the book-reviews occupying the place which hers would have the next Saturday. They were rather appallingly well written; she could see that they were indefinitely better done than hers; she wondered if they were Mr. Evans's, and she gave a little sigh of dismay; while her eye wandered idly to the next column, where a name arrested it.

The name was Fenton's; and the paragraph in which it occurred seemed to become alive and sentient

under her eyes. It was a despatch from Washington, rehearsing, with telegraphic brevity, the facts of the wreck of the Meteor, as furnished to the State Department by the Consul at Tahiti, from the statements of the survivors.

Five days after the disaster the French ship Belle Paysanne, which brought them to that port, had fallen in with an open boat containing Captain Rollins and a number of the Meteor's crew and passengers, who reported that Lieutenant Fenton and three others had volunteered to remain on the reef where the Meteor struck till the overladen boat could find land and return to them. The Belle Paysanne altered her course, and visited the scene of the catastrophe; but the wreck had then disappeared, and there were no traces of the men left behind. A week later, however, the ship picked up another of the Meteor's boats, with the two sailors who had remained with Lieutenant Fenton. From the narrative of these men it seemed that the wreck had broken up the day after Captain Rollins abandoned her, and that Lieutenant Fenton, who had lingered on board after helping to launch the boat, was caught in the wreck and carried down with her. His companion, a passenger named Giffen, was rescued by the seamen; but he had been so badly bruised by the floating timbers that he died the following day.

They confirmed the statements of Captain Rollins and all the other survivors, concerning the heroic behaviour of Lieutenant Fenton, who had chosen to remain on the rock rather than imperil the lives

of the passengers in Captain Rollins's boat, and who had been most efficient throughout the events that followed the striking of the ship. The boat in which the men were found was in a ruinous condition, and was set adrift after their rescue. A large sum of money, belonging to Captain Rollins, which they had recovered from the wreck before it broke up, was restored to him.

XVII.

HELEN did not come down to her breakfast, and Cornelia Root, who was finishing hers about the time there began to be question at Miss Harkness's absence, said she would step in and see what the matter was after she got on her things. She found Helen sitting before the empty grate; the gas was burning, and the bed untouched; and a thrill of terror went through her lest Helen should be sitting there dead. When, after bidding her good-morning in vain, she ventured to touch her on the shoulder, Helen looked round, with a stare that, for the moment, made Cornelia repent being so bold. "For the good Lord's sake!" cried the girl, "what *is* it, Miss Harkness?"

"Oh, nothing," said Helen. She began to laugh, and tried to hide under her hands the newspaper she had in her lap, and then, as if at her failure in this, she began to weep piteously. "Look!" she exclaimed, opening the paper, and pointing to the story of the shipwreck, "he 's dead! And those men killed him. Oh, I 've thought it all out!"

Cornelia took the paper, and, after a swift glance at the paragraph, put it aside without questioning

her. "I guess you better lie down, Miss Harkness, and try to get some rest. I'm going to have your fire made up."

She got her to bed, and then she conferred with the landlady outside the door; she ended by sacrificing her own preference for a female physician, and calling in the doctor who, Mrs. Hewitt recollected hearing Miss Harkness once say, had taken care of her father.

She sent a note to Miss Kingsbury telling her that she was afraid Miss Harkness was going to be sick, and asking her to come to see her; but word was returned that Miss Kingsbury was in New York, and would not be home till the latter part of the week. It was then too late to move the sick girl to her friend's house.

It did not need the light which Miss Kingsbury threw on her relation to Lieutenant Fenton to enable Helen's fellow-boarders to understand what had happened. Cornelia Root had understood it at once, with austere resolution not to recognise her own privity to the fact even to herself; Mrs. Evans had divined it, and talked it over with her husband, who halted between remorse for having laughed at Helen's contributions and secret question whether he would not be justifiable in using a parallel incident in his play; Mrs. Hewitt guessed it out, in a hungry inability to talk it over with anybody, and got her first real comfort out of the expansive desolation in which Miss Kingsbury confided to them all her grief for what had happened, and stated the facts as fully as she knew them.

"Well, it didn't stand to reason," said Mrs. Hewitt, "that she would care so much for a brother, and an adopted one, at that."

"O no!" cried Clara. "It was much more than that!"

She got a professional nurse to relieve the devotion of all Helen's volunteer nurses; and from this young woman Mrs. Hewitt at first hoped everything, but only to be the more keenly disappointed; for, so far from reporting the tenor of Helen's delirium, the nurse wholly refused to talk of her patient. She would sit at Mrs. Hewitt's own table, and blink at Mrs. Hewitt through her glasses, and never say a word, morning, noon, or night, until Mrs. Hewitt did not know what *would* become of her. Mrs. Hewitt's disgust with the nurse authorised the first full laugh which Evans had permitted himself since Helen's sickness began. It was after a favourable turn had taken place; nevertheless Cornelia Root bent upon him a look of keen reproof.

"Oh, come now, Miss Root!" he protested, "I 'm not going to stand that. I 've just succeeded, after infinite pains and argument, in convincing Mrs. Evans that *I* didn't cause Miss Harkness's fever by laughing at her literature whilst I was putting it into shape that night; and I still believe that if she had died my wife would have required me to deliver myself up to justice. But I am an innocent man, and I won't have you going round and looking as though this never would have happened if it hadn't been for me."

Cornelia opened her mouth to deny the accusation, but Evans hastily interposed. "Do you mean to say that you haven't thought—that you haven't *felt*—that I was somehow to blame for the whole thing?" She refused to answer, with a dignity that did not avail her. "Don't fall back upon the fact that I lent her the newspaper! I didn't invent the facts, at any rate; but I've suffered under the ban of public opinion quite as if I had, and now I'm going to stop it."

"What nonsense!" said Cornelia. "But if your conscience pricks you for anything, *I'm* not going to comfort you."

"Oh, it isn't *my* conscience that pricks me! It's *your* conscience, and Mrs. Evans's conscience, that have goaded me to desperation. I can get on very well with my own conscience."

As soon as Helen could be safely taken away, Clara had her carried to her house, where she completed her convalescence amidst every superfluity of luxury. For many weeks she remained gathering strength, and listlessly accepting service and favour that she never could repay; but at last the day came when the tide of life rose high enough in her veins to beat in feeble revolt.

"You know," she said, "this must end some time, Clara. I'm not your mother or sister. You can't keep on taking care of me, as if I belonged to you."

"You *do* belong to me, Helen dear," cried her friend, with a rush of generous tenderness. "Don't

talk of anything ending, but just stay on and on. Why shouldn't you? What would you do?"

"Ah, that 's the old question!"

"I didn't mean that! I meant, why should you try to do anything?"

"I suppose, because I 'm not a lily of the field, for one thing." Clara laughed gratefully for the gleam of gaiety from Helen, whose sadness had been heavy on her heart. "I should be glad enough never to do anything, or even be anything again. You understand, Clara, what I've been through?" she asked.

"You hinted something once, and I could guess the rest."

"Then we won't speak of it. It 's such a mercy we needn't! But you can see that all the past is swept away from me. There 's nothing left; I have to begin everything new, with new ideas and new objects. I used to be ambitious about helping myself, but I 'm not now; even my pride in that is broken." The tears of self-pity started to her eyes. "Yes, I would be humbly grateful if I needn't do anything. But I must. And the old question comes back: what?"

"Oh, Helen," said her friend devoutly, "if you would only stay and be a companion to me—anything!"

Helen smiled. "To cheer you up—read to you—keep you interested—go pleasure journeys with you? Yes, I should be a gay companion."

"Well, then, my housekeeper, if you *will* insist

upon usefulness—and I don't blame you for it; I should myself. Why shouldn't you be my housekeeper? I have heard of girls trying that!"

"I should be glad to learn housekeeping of *you*, Clara. You know I don't know anything about it, and that you know everything. I used to pretend to keep house for papa; but Margaret really did it all. I must be fit for something; but I can't tell what it is, yet."

"I can't bear to hear you talk so, Helen. Why don't you try writing again? I'm sure Mr. Evans would be glad to have you."

"Don't!" cried Helen. "I couldn't think of anything I tried before—that." She touched her calamity with the word, and then struggled to get away from it with a curious effort of her broken spirit, which Clara said afterwards made her think of a crippled bird trying to fly. "I'm a fearful problem, Clara. But don't worry over me any longer, now. There must be some very simple answer to me if we take time to think it out; and I'm afraid I'm willing to take all the time you'll let me. I'll accept any sort of disguised charity at present; and if you want to start a subscription for me, Clara, you may. Only, don't let me know about it."

A thought seemed to strike Miss Kingsbury, which kept her silent for a moment. "There was a Hungarian lady here last year, who had a plan of gardening for girls—vegetable and flower gardening. I wonder if you met her."

"No," said Helen.

"She was at the Kelloggs'. She was Mrs. Kellogg's religion for the time being." Helen did not catch hopefully at the gospel of the Magyar prophetess, but looked with a rueful surprise at her friend, who went on: "Then there has been a good deal of talk about farming for women,—small fruits, and poultry." She threw out the suggestion diffidently, but gathered courage when once it was projected from her. "I suppose one becomes interested in it, and gets very fond of the poor little things."

"Which, Clara—the berries or the chickens?" asked Helen, with a lifeless laugh. "I should want to eat the berries; but I can't imagine eating poultry of one's personal acquaintance."

"Oh, I meant having an affection for the chickens; you 'd have to let other people eat them." She joined in Helen's laugh at the futility of her suggestions; but she added: "Well, we must think out the answer to you. There 's no hurry."

"O no."

That afternoon Margaret came with a heart full of proud contrition to blame herself for having been in Ireland for the past three months, and for having just learned of Helen's sickness and whereabouts. She wept over Helen's sorrows, and over her wasted looks and hollow eyes; and the girl was freer to talk with her of what had happened than she had yet felt with any one else.

She told her about the shipwreck, of which Margaret had not heard before, and she showed her a scrap of paper, the cover of an official despatch.

"Here are his last words. He wrote them to me while he was standing on that rock in the middle of the sea, and they came from Washington after I was taken sick."

"Oh, Miss Helen, Miss Helen, how did you ever live to tell the tale?"

Helen did not answer. "We were engaged, and he was coming home," she said, with a sort of crazy satisfaction in the poignancy of Margaret's sympathy. She threw the burden of suffering upon her for the time, and talked with an unsparing hardness for herself. "But I deserved it—I deserved it all." Her thin hands trembled in her lap, and her head shook. "Where are you living now, Margaret?" she broke off abruptly.

"Why, Miss Helen," answered Margaret, with a blush, "I 'm living in the Port, in a house of my own."

"In a house of your own?"

"Yes, Miss Helen." Margaret hesitated. "You see, there was an old fellow on the ship coming back, that had been out to Ireland too, and he kept talking so much about it all the way, and never leaving me a moment's peace, that I thought maybe I 'd better. And so, I did—three weeks ago."

"Did what?"

"Married him, Miss Helen." Margaret seemed doubtful of the effect of the intelligence upon Helen; she hastened to add in excuse, "He 's a very quiet body, and he works at the glass-works in East Cambridge. We have a nice little house, and I

should be much pleased to have you come out some day and see it, Miss Helen. The worst of it is, that there isn't enough to keep a person busy, and I 'm thinking that maybe I 'll take a boarder. There 's a spare room. He 'd like to see you, Miss Helen. I 've told him a good deal about you."

"Thank you, Margaret, I will come out some day. I should like to see your husband."

"Oh, he 's no great things. But he 's a very quiet body."

Helen was looking at the bonnet on Margaret's head, and she answered rather absently, "Yes." The bonnet was a combination of purple fruits and magenta flowers, caught in a net of lace, as if to protect them from the depredations of birds and insects. "Where did you get your bonnet, Margaret?"

"In Hanover Street, Miss Helen," said Margaret. "I don't think it 's very good; do you? I paid enough for it; but money won't buy the like of the bonnets that *you* used to make me, Miss Helen."

"You'd better let me see what I can do with this. The shape isn't bad," said Helen critically.

"Oh, I couldn't, Miss Helen. After what I've said to you! I should feel as if I 'd hinted."

"You needn't 'be under a compliment' for it, Margaret," said Helen, with a sudden inspiration; "You may pay me for making over the bonnet!"

"Oh, Miss Helen!"

"Yes. I need the money. I must work for my living now."

"How good of you!" said Clara, when she found Helen with the bonnet in her hands the next day, and learned whose it was.

"It 's good *for* me," returned Helen. "Margaret pays me for doing it. Perhaps *this* is the solution."

Clara permitted herself a silence in which her imagination kindled with the idea. "Helen," she cried, "it is splendid! Why shouldn't you do something of the sort? There 's nothing disgraceful about it, and with your taste, your *genius*, you could make every bonnet a work of art—as they do those picture-dresses in London."

They talked the scheme over, and as soon as Helen was strong enough to attempt it, they put it in practice. Clara wanted her to set up a shop in her drawing-room, but they devolved upon something more modest in the end, and Helen took Mrs. Hewitt's parlour floor. Clara advanced the capital; a tasteful and *récherché* stock of frames and feathers and ribbons was chosen, and Helen embarked in the enterprise under the favouring smiles of a world at once fashionable and sympathetic and high-minded. It would not be easy to say just how the scheme came to final ruin. But when once a lively lady had said Miss Harkness's bonnets had so much *touch*, and another had answered, "O yes, they were *all* touch," and both had then tittered in tacit recognition of a certain amateurish lack in them, it was well on the way to failure. By the time that a visiting New York lady had said Miss Harkness seemed to be quite a Boston fashion, and had

been answered, "O no; a Boston *passion*," she was no longer so. Clara Kingsbury wore her Harkness bonnet to the bitter end (as some one phrased it), but she was notoriously interested, and her heroic devotion counted for nothing. All Helen's gains went to pay the assistant whom she had taken from a well-known milliner's shop, with a just conviction of her own unfitness for practical details; and when her stock was exhausted, and the ladies had given away her bonnets to their second-girls, she had nothing but her debt to Clara for her pains. They cried over the failure together when they had to face it at last, and Clara inveighed against the hollowness and ingratitude of the world. But Helen took the blame upon herself. "It was arrogant in me to suppose that I could succeed in any business without serving an apprenticeship to it—without beginning at the bottom. It was like those silly women who go on the stage, and expect to begin at the very top, over the heads of people who have faithfully worked all their lives learning to be actors. It 's just!"

"That doesn't make it any the easier to bear," Clara repined.

"It does for me," said Helen. "If the things that have happened to me were not just, I *couldn't* endure them."

Clara took her in her arms, vowing that she was the best and bravest creature in the world, and that she had never done anything except suffer unmerited wrong. She would not hear any talk of the money

she had advanced; she professed that if their undertaking had succeeded, she had always intended to take her share of the profits, and that she was more than willing to take her share of the loss. How little it was, compared to Helen's, who had lost time and labour, and everything but courage! She did not understand how Helen kept up.

"Because I *must*," Helen explained. "You can bear things that you *must* bear. I suppose that's what makes death endurable to those that have to live on." Clara was silent in awe of her sad wisdom, and she went on more lightly: "Besides, this hasn't been altogether a loss to me, this experience. I've learnt a good many things. I've really learnt how to make bonnets, for one thing, and I believe I can be of some little use to others as well as myself. I've got a new idea, and I'm going out to talk with Margaret about it."

"With Margaret! Oh, Helen, dear, what is it? I'm afraid—"

"That it's something foolish? It isn't. It's only something distasteful—something very humble. It's something Miss Root suggested."

Clara was only partly comforted. "Miss Root is terribly severe. She doesn't know how to spare people's sensibilities."

"She's had to do with people who have no business to have any sensibilities—like me. I've thought it all out, Clara." A woman instinctively respects another woman who says this, and believes her; Clara listened attentively. "I've thought it all out,

and I see that I haven't talent enough to be first-rate in anything. I couldn't endure to be a second-rate artist or writer; but I don't mind being a second-rate milliner; and that's what I'm going to be, if I can. And now I won't tell you anything more about my scheme till I see whether it's practicable. People will laugh, but they won't sneer, and if they pity me, I shall be glad and grateful for their pity."

Clara tried to get from her some details of her plan, but she would not give them; she would not leave her any comfort but the fact that she could not say or do anything to prevent her trying to carry out her plan.

She went out to Margaret's in the horse-cars, and walked down the little side street to the end of the row of French-roof cottages, in the last and poorest of which Margaret was so proud of living. Helen's sickness and convalescence, and her subsequent experiment in æsthetic millinery, had carried her through the summer and the early fall; the young elms along the side-walk had dropped their last yellow leaves, and the grass in the narrow door-yards lay limp and flat after the heavy November frosts; around, the open lots stretched brown and bare, swept by an east wind that brought the salt savour of the bay rank across them. A few slatternly goats, lank and heavy-uddered, wandered over the dismal expanse, as if to crop the battered tomato-cans and old boots in which it abounded.

Margaret's house had never had more than one coat of pinkish-brown paint, and it looked rather

thinly clad for the season; but within, a pungent heat from the furnace, which did more than anything else to make Margaret feel that she was an American householder, struck into the parlour where she received Helen. It was curious and amusing to see how little Margaret had profited by her life in Beacon Steps, in arranging and decorating her best room. There were no evidences of the better taste to which she had been accustomed half her days; she had simply tried to make her parlour as like all the other parlours in that row as she could, with a wood-coloured ingrain carpet, tan terry furniture, and a marble-topped centre-table; if she had been a Protestant, she would have had a large gilt-edged Bible on this; as it was, she had an infant Jesus in wax under a glass bell.

Helen stopped her in her ceremonious preparations for making company of her. "Margaret," she said abruptly, "I want to come and live with you,—if you think you can trust me for my board a while."

"Indeed, Miss Helen," said Margaret with a splendour that was worth more than money to her, "I don't know what you mean, exactly; but if you do mean to come and live with me, there 'll be no talk of board."

"Well, well," returned Helen, "we 'll talk of that later; we 're both pretty headstrong." Margaret deprecated this, as far as Helen was concerned, with a flattered simper. "But now I 'll tell you what I want to do. You know I 've been trying to set up for a fashionable milliner in Boston."

"Yes, Miss Helen," sighed Margaret.

"And I 've made a failure of it. The fashionable people don't want my bonnets."

"They 're a set of hateful things, Miss Helen," cried Margaret, "and the best of them isn't fit to scrub your floors for you."

Helen laughed at the unmeasured zeal of Margaret's loyalty, expressed in terms so little fit for the polite ears of those they devoted to condemnation. "No, no, Margaret; they were quite right, and I was all wrong. I didn't know how to make bonnets when I began."

"Miss Helen, if there 's been one person spoke to me on this very street about that last bonnet you done over for me, there 's been a hundred! Everybody says it 's the becomingest bonnet, with more real Beacon Street style to it than any they ever saw me have on!"

"Well, I 'm very glad," answered Helen patiently; "and that brings me to what I wanted to say. "If I didn't know how to make bonnets before I began, I did know when I got through—perhaps by spoiling so many." Margaret sniffed a disdainful denial of the premises, and remained with inflated nostrils, while Helen went on. "And what I think is this: that if I could come out here, and take your spare room, you might tell your friends—those poor girls that sometimes waste so much on bonnets—that I could do their work for them just as well, and a great deal cheaper—"

"*You* work for them good-for-nothing hussies, Miss

Helen! *No*, indeed! It 's bad enough having you work for *ladies*—if they choose to call themselves such after they throw your bonnets back on your hands—but as for them trollops of general housework and second-girls, let them fling their money away; they 're soon enough parted from it; but you shan't take a stitch for them."

"Margaret, Margaret!" cried Helen. "I 'm not strong enough to talk to you, if you go on in that silly way. I haven't a cent of my own in the world, and I must work, or I must beg. The question is whether you will let me have your spare room to live and work in, or whether you will turn me out of doors."

"Oh, Miss Helen, how can you say such a thing?"

"Well, then, don't *talk* so!"

"You can have the whole house, and all that we can do for you, and you shall not pay a penny for it."

Helen rose. "Very well, then, I shall not take it. You don't want me to have the room, and that 's your way of putting me off. I understand you, Margaret. But I *did* suppose that after all these years you 'd lived with us, you *wouldn't* turn me into the streets."

She sank weakly into her chair again, and Margaret called to all the saints to witness if she did not wish to do in every particular exactly what Helen desired.

"Well, then," demanded Helen tragically, "will you let me pay you five dollars a week, and make all your bonnets for you?"

"Yes, yes! Indeed I will, Miss Helen!"

"And never let your horrid, wicked, foolish old pride interfere with your taking the money—if I ever get it to pay you?"

Margaret solemnly promised, and Helen said, "Let me go to the room at once, then. I'm *so* tired!" and suffered herself to be helped up-stairs to the little chamber which Margaret had adorned in the worst taste of Limekiln Avenue, with chromos over the chimneypiece, and a set of painted furniture, grained to match the oak-paper on the wall. It was like the inside of an ugly box; but Helen fell upon the clean bed, and slept a sleep which carried her well through the afternoon, and left her refreshed and encouraged to begin the long fight, in which she forced Margaret from one stand after another in her determination to treat her as a lady guest. But she understood Margaret well enough to know where to hold her hand, and when Margaret sent *him* to eat his supper in the kitchen, and sat stiffly down in fresh linen cuffs and collar to pour the tea for her in the dining-room, and would not touch anything on the table herself, Helen knew better than to interfere.

When work began to come to her, she resolutely set her face against the indignant majesty with which Margaret would have treated the poor girls her customers. It was clearly Margaret's intention to make them feel that it was an honour and a privilege to have their bonnets made by her Miss Helen; at first she remained present at their interviews, brow

beating them by her haughty silence into acquiescence with every suggestion of Miss Helen's, and reducing them to a submission so abject that Helen was sure some of them ordered just the ribbons and flowers they did not want, and others bought bonnets when they had merely come to talk them over. Margaret followed to the door one hapless creature who had failed, in her confusion, to give any order, with allusions to people who wasted other people's time for nothing so cuttingly sarcastic, that Helen revolted, and positively forbade her to interfere; after that she was obliged to content herself with a haughty reception and dismissal of the customers.

Helen did her best to serve the simple, stupid things cheaply and well. She knew that she saved them money, and she made their mistaken tastes her own, and in that way sometimes corrected them, without their knowing it, and launched them upon the world a little less formidable in shape and crude in colour than they had intended. But she instinctively studied to obey one of the first laws of business, and that was to supply an existing demand till she had created another. She did not attempt to make her shop—for finally it was nothing more nor less—a school of æsthetics, as she had in first attempting millinery; she advised and suggested, but she decided nothing. She put both her pride and her preferences into the pocket where she bestowed her customers' money, and kept only a conscience about giving them the material worth of it. They were a great variety of poor girls and women, begin-

ning with the cooks and second-girls of Margaret's acquaintance, whose patronage founded Helen's prosperity, and rising through economical mothers of families to the upper ranks of seamstresses and "sales-ladies." One day there came a young coloured girl, when luckily Helen was alone; Margaret would never have "demeaned" herself by receiving her, but Helen received her, and in due time sent her forth resplendent in a white hat trimmed in orange and purple.

This incident of her new career seemed to give it an ultimate stamp of authenticity, and it afforded her such saddened satisfaction as could come to her through a sense of recognised usefulness. She spoke of it to Miss Kingsbury and Cornelia Root, who equally approved; the former because she admired everything Helen did, and the latter because she found it, as Helen herself did, a final testimony to her practicality.

"It's all very well in that way," said Mr. Evans, whom Cornelia had not been able to refrain from triumphing over with a fact that refuted all his predictions of renewed failure for Helen. "So is any one who caters to a depraved popular taste of any sort, practical. But what I want you to consider is whether there is not something immoral in allowing a savage preference for purple and orange to indulge itself. If I read my Ruskin aright, I understand that there is some sort of occult connection between a feeling for colour and righteousness. Now you say that Miss Harkness allows her customers

to array themselves in whatever hue of the rainbow they like best; that she daily and hourly violates her own sense of right in colour for the sake of money. Don't you call that immoral?"

"What do you have anything to do for with a paper that publishes all those personals and society gossip?" demanded Cornelia in her turn.

"Oh, I'm a poor, weak, erring male man! But I've frequently been taught that when Woman entered the arena of business, it would be in some way that would elevate and ennoble affairs. I shudder to think what will become of us when women go into politics, if they show themselves so ready in business at all the tricks of trade. But I've noticed that when Ladies—I'm not speaking of women now—determine to be practical, they let no consideration stand in their way: they aim to succeed. Look at the unprincipled way they conduct their fairs for benevolent objects! What prices! What swindling lotteries of all sorts! No, your Miss Harkness is like the rest; and it appears to me that at the present moment she is pandering to a very depraved taste in ribbonry, and I see nothing to admire in the mere fact that she is making a living by it. Lots of people make a living by selling crooked whisky."

Cornelia Root disdained to reply. She only said: "You talked very differently when she was lyin' sick here in the house; you couldn't pity and praise her enough, then."

Evans laughed shamelessly. "Well, I was afraid

she was going to die, and we always try to make interest with the other world by being kind to people about to go into it. But we never keep it up after if they turn back."

He succeeded no better than he meant in unsettling Cornelia Root's mind in regard to Helen. He wished his wife, who usually made her own bonnets, to go out to the Port and order them of Helen, and in turn suffered much the same sort of reproach which he was fond of addressing to Cornelia. Mrs. Evans said he had never before wished her to get her bonnets in Cambridgeport, and she understood that Miss Harkness had quite all the work she could do. She had helped to take care of Helen during her sickness, and had been devotedly kind to her, like every one else in the house; but a woman likes to place her own limits to her benevolence, especially towards other women; and the husband will commit an error who attempts to extend them. She asked him why he did not wish her to get her bonnets of some of the common milliners in Hanover Street, and he was unable to say why.

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XVIII.

THE world of fashion, on whose bonnets Helen had experimented in learning her business, accepted the hearsay of her success in a humbler way with self-satisfaction, and attributed far greater things to her than she achieved. It understood that she was making money, and several fictions in regard to the sums she had amassed had a ready currency. The world intended to look her up, when it had time; it was neither hard-hearted nor indifferent, but it was preoccupied. There were ladies who meant almost every day to drive out and see Helen; there were others who refrained because they fancied she would rather not have them come; but all were unfeignedly glad that the poor thing had found something at last that she *could* do. Her experiment in æsthetic millinery had thrown a great deal of light on her former endeavours; people said there was hardly anything she had *not* tried. In fine, they practically left her acquaintance and her memory in the keeping of Clara Kingsbury, who remained faithful to both, and perhaps did the best thing for them in rather hushing them up. She was herself a little sensitive about Helen's first experiment, and

she was aware that many people held her indirectly responsible for the enthusiasm with which they had encouraged it. She always answered inquiries about Helen in an elusive way; she generalised her, and passed her over as quickly as possible, so that really the world had it to say that, so far from having dropped Helen, she had dropped herself. It was certainly not to blame for having heard nothing of her failing health, which began to break some six months after she had established herself at Margaret's. She had worked very hard, for she had incurred expenses during her fever at Mrs. Hewitt's, for which she was still in debt to Clara Kingsbury, and she had cherished the secret determination to reimburse her for all her losses through her. She had not earned enough to do this, but she had worn herself thin and pale by the time the advancing spring made it a year since she had heard of Robert's death. Her friend wished her to give up and go down to her cottage with her; but Helen refused to do more than spare herself a little, and she was still at Margaret's when the Butlers and Rays arrived from Europe.

They had been abroad longer than they had intended, because Captain Butler had continued in feeble health; but now they had come home to stay, as Marian wrote from London before they sailed. They were all going to be in Beverley together till Ray could decide whether to buy or to build in Boston, and Marian said that the first thing must be an indefinite visit from Helen. There was a

tone of peremptory hospitality in her letter, which made Helen, in spite of her affection for them, dread the return of her old friends. She was much more comfortable with Clara Kingsbury, who had become the friend of her adversity, who realised it, and took it seriously; and she could see that it was still a freakish piece of wilfulness to the Butlers. Marian somehow treated her as if she were a little girl, and rather an absurd little girl. She knew that she could right herself against Marian's assumptions of sincerity and wisdom, but she shrank weakly from the effort, and she foresaw that she should not have the physical strength to make it.

In fact she yielded at once when Marian drove out to Cambridgeport and took possession of her. She was not even to be allowed to wait till they were settled at Beverley, but was to go down with them; and Marian came from the hotel where they were stopping for the day to fetch her.

Marian had always been large and blonde; she now showed a tendency to stoutness; she was very English in dress, and she had the effect of feeling as if she looked very English. In fact, she had visited so much at great English houses that she was experiencing the difficulty, which sometimes besets American sojourners in England, of distinguishing herself from the aristocracy, or at least the landed gentry. The illusion shortly yields to American air, but it is very perfect while it lasts.

Marian had a nurse for her little boy, and she called this nurse by her surname simply; she was

quite English in her intonation, and she was at the same time perfectly honest and unaffected in these novel phases, and as thoroughly good and kind-hearted as ever. But her handsome bulk and her airs of a large strange world made Helen feel undersized and provincial; in spite of all she could do, and in spite of her accurate knowledge of just what Marian Ray was and had always been, her friend made her feel provincial. She had been almost two years out of society, and for the last six months her relations had been with inferior people; she asked herself if she might not really have retrograded in mind and manners, and she gladly escaped from Marian to the others; to the exuberant welcome of the younger girls; to the pitying tenderness of Mrs. Butler; to the quiet and cordial simplicity of Ray,—his quiet seemed to have been intensified by absence. But what went most to her heart was Captain Butler's tremulous fondness, and the painful sense that the others were watching, whether they would or not, for the effect of his broken health upon her. He brightened at meeting Helen; they said afterwards that he had not seemed for a long time so much like himself; and they left him to entertain her while they made a show of busying themselves about other affairs. It was probably an indulgence they had agreed to grant his impatience. He kept her little worn hands in his, and looked at her forefinger, roughed with the needle, and deeply tinted with the stuffs in which she worked, and it seemed to be this sight that suggested his words:

"I managed very badly for you, my dear! If it hadn't been for my hesitation when I first doubted that rascal, I could have made terms for you with the creditors. I don't wonder you would never accept help from me! It 's very good of you to come to us now."

"Oh, Captain Butler, you break my heart! Did you think *that* was the reason? I only wished to help myself. Indeed, indeed, that was all. I wouldn't have accepted any provision from the creditors."

"You need never have known it. That could have been arranged," said Captain Butler.

"It 's been a mercy, the work—my only mercy!" cried the girl. "*Oh*, Captain Butler!" She caught her hands away and hid her face in them, and let the black wave of her sorrow go over her once more. When it was past, she lifted her dim eyes to those of the old man. "Did you read about it—all about it?"

"Yes, my dear, and many a night I 've lain awake and thought about it!"

"Did you ever think that he might still be alive—that perhaps those men came away and left him, and he escaped somehow? Don't tell me that you did if you never did!"

The old man remained silent.

"Then they must have killed him—to get that money—"

"No; probably they told the truth. It might very well have happened as they said," pleaded Captain Butler.

"Ah, you know it couldn't!"

Again his hopeless silence assented, and Helen said, with a long, deep sigh, "That is all. You know how I must have felt. There is no use talking of it. I only wanted to see you and speak of it just once, because I knew you would know. Thank you!" she said, with a wandering pitifulness that forced a groan from her old friend's lips.

"For crushing your last hope, Helen?"

"Ah! it's better not to have false hopes."

She stole her hands back into his, and after a while she began to tell him quietly of her life, and what she had done and expected to do; and he gave her the comfort of his fatherly praise, in which there was no surprise or foolish admiration, such as afflicted her in most people's knowledge of her efforts.

"I don't have to work very hard," she explained, in answer to a question of his; "not harder than I wish; and I have got to working at last as other people do who earn their living, without thinking at all that it's I that am doing it. That's a comfort,—a great comfort. And I know my trade, and I'm sure that I do good work. Do you remember when I told you that I should be a milliner if I were ever left to take care of myself?"

"I remember, Helen."

They were both silent; then she said, with a light sigh, "I'm only feeling a little fagged now."

"You must stay with us, Helen," began Captain Butler.

"I shall be glad enough to stay a while," she

answered evasively, and in her own mind she had already fixed the term.

It was inevitable, perhaps, that she should extend the term. The summer was a vacant time, at best, and she could let the luxury of Captain Butler's house flatter her feeble health into strength again without such a bad conscience as she would have had if she felt that she was spoiling her future, or if she had got back her strength very rapidly. The family did not see many people, and only saw them in a quiet informal way in which Helen could share. The world, with which she had never had any quarrel, took her back kindly enough; it discreetly suppressed its curiosity; it spoke of bonnets and ribbons in her presence with a freedom that was wiser and politer than an avoidance of such topics would have been; it sent her invitations to little luncheons and low teas, and accepted her excuses gracefully, and always renewed the invitations, just as if she had come.

The old affection enfolded and enfeebled her. It was quite as bad as she had feared. She said to herself sometimes that it would be better to break off at once and go back to Margaret's; but she did not do so. The thought of the little wooden house baking beside the dust of Limekiln Avenue, and her own low chamber gathering heat and mosquitoes from day to day under the slope of the slated mansard, opposed itself to the actuality of the Butler cottage, with its wide verandahs that looked seaward through cool breaks of foliage on the lawn dropping smoothly to the boulders on the beach; with its orderly succes-

sion of delicate meals; with the pretty chintzed and muslined room in which she seemed to drowse her life away, safe from the harms that had hunted her so long; and she felt how easy it would be to accept indefinitely the fond hospitality that claimed her. She said that she must not; but in the meantime she did. She had the soft, feline preference for sunny exposures and snug corners which is to blame for so much frailty of purpose, or so much purposeless frailty in women; and now she was further weakened by ill-health. She stayed on and on, in spite of the feeling that they all regarded her as a poor, broken thing, who could no longer be the ideal of the young girls, or the equal friend of Marian.

Mrs. Ray was much preoccupied with her baby, with the house that Ray had decided to build, with the friends abroad from whom she heard and to whom she wrote. She carried with her an impression of wealth, an odour of opulence, which accorded well with her affluent personality; she accepted her lot of rich woman with a robust satisfaction which would have been vulgar except for her incorruptible good-heartedness. She never talked of money, but she was a living expression of large expenditure; and in discussing the plans of her new house with Helen, she had an unconsciousness of cost, as related to questions of convenience or beauty, which went further to plunge Helen into hopeless poverty than any boast of riches could have done. Her manner was none the less effective for her assumption that Helen was equally able to pay for such a house. She

was not planning altogether for her own comfort and splendour, though these were duly provided for; but she was looking after the wellbeing of everybody in her household, and she was as willing to lavish upon the servants' quarters as her own.

"I think it's barbaric," she said, "to make those poor creatures, because they do our work, pass their days in holes in the ground and coops under the roof, and I'm determined that they shall be decently housed with me, at least. I'm making the architect work out this idea—it was something I talked over —with"—she added, with the effect of feeling it absurd to shrink from saying it—"Lord Rainford."

They both continued quietly looking at the plan, but the word had been spoken, and they no longer talked of the servants' quarters in Marian's house. Helen leaned back in her chair, with her listless hands in her lap, and Marian took up the work she had laid down before unfolding the plan.

"When did you see him last?" asked Helen.

"Oh, he came to see us off at Liverpool," returned Marian.

"Was he—well?"

"Yes, as well as he usually is. I believe he's never very strong, though he's never in a bad way. He's much better than he used to be."

Helen was silent. Then she began, as if involuntarily: "Marian"—and stopped.

"Well?"

She was forced to go on. "Did you know—"

"He told Ned. Now, Helen," she added quickly,

"I promised Ned not to open this subject with you!"

"You haven't," returned Helen with quiet sadness. "*I* opened it. I knew that we should have to speak of it some time. I feel that I was not to blame, and I have never felt sorry for anything but his—disappointment."

"He never blamed you. He understood just how it happened, and how he had mistaken you. He is the soul of delicate appreciation."

"Yes, I know that."

"And his only trouble was, that he should have forced you to say that you were engaged."

"Yes."

"And I don't believe that any of us grieved more sincerely for you than he did."

"Oh, I believe it."

"Well," said Marian, breaking her needle in expression of her resolution, "I won't talk with you about Lord Rainford, Helen; for I can only talk with you in one way about him, and I promised Ned not to do that!"

"What way?" asked Helen.

"You know!"

"Now," cried Helen, "you must tell me all about it! If I didn't believe that I had suffered as much as he, I couldn't forgive myself. How did he find out about—about—Robert?" She whispered the last word.

"We told him!"

"And he was sorry for me—he—

"Yes."

"How kind he is!"

"Yes, he is kind," said Marian. "He 's a good deal changed since he was here." Helen looked the interest which she did not otherwise express, and Marian continued: "He 's giving up a good many of his wild Utopian ideas about democracy, and all that kind of thing. You know, at one time—before he first came out to America—he thought of dividing up his estates amongst the labourers on them."

"What a strange idea!"

"Yes. But there was some legal obstacle to that —I don't know what—and now he 's devoting himself to making his people comfortable in the station where he finds them. He conforms a great deal more than he used to, in every way. I think his acquaintance with America did him good: he saw what a humbug democracy and equality really were. He must have seen that *nobody* practically believed in them; and we must say this for the English, that they 're too honest to get any pleasure merely from the names of things. He must have found that people here were just as anxious about position and occupation as they are in England."

"He seemed very much puzzled by it," said Helen. "I couldn't understand why."

"Because he was very sincere; the English are all sincerer than we are. They accept rank and royalty, and carry it out in good faith; and we accept democracy, and then shirk the consequences. That 's what Ned says. I wonder that the Englishmen who

have been here, or seen us running after titles abroad, can keep from laughing in our faces! And I *don't* wonder that Lord Rainford was cured of his fancies in America. Why, he actually, at one time, was a sort of republican!"

"A very curious sort," said Helen. "He said that Americans were all commoners."

Marian paused. "Did he say that? Well," she added with heroic resolution, "I suppose we are."

"I don't think so," said Helen. "Or at least it wasn't delicate of him to say so."

"I don't believe he meant anything by it. He gave us to understand—or Ray at least—that he particularly admired you for your courage in earning your own living, and being no more ashamed of your work than if you were noble."

"Yes," said Helen thoughtfully, "I suppose it might be natural for him, if he had those notions, to idealise us here, just as it would be for one of us to idealise them: it would be his romance."

"Certainly," said Marian, with eager assent, as if this mood ought to be encouraged in Helen, "that is just the way."

"And, perhaps," Helen went on, "it would have been better for me if I had been such a girl as he supposed—trying to help myself because I respected work, and all that. But I wasn't."

"Of course not."

"I was merely doing it because I couldn't bear to be a burden to any one; and I've never had any higher motive."

"And I'm sure it's high enough," said Marian. "And crazy enough to suit *any* one," she added. "He would like it all the better when he found out what it really was; especially now that his own ideas have changed a little."

"He was an aristocrat at heart all the time," returned Helen. "If I had been born to work for my living, like the poor girls whom I make bonnets for—"

"It would have been another thing, quite. We're all inconsistent. I don't deny it. There's no merit in working for a living, whatever disgrace there is in not doing it. You don't find your Bridgets and Norahs, or your Sadies and Mamies so very superior to human weaknesses that you wish the rest of us to form ourselves on the pattern of working girls."

"O no," said Helen, with humorous sadness. "They're poor silly things, most of them, and as full of prejudice and exclusiveness as any one. I've never seen distinctions in society so awful as the distinction between shop-girls and parlour-girls. Their differences seem such a burlesque of ours, that sometimes I can hardly help laughing at the whole thing. I supposed once that all work-people were on a level; but really I had no idea of inequality till I came down to them. I daresay," she added, "Lord Rainford's experience in coming down to *us* must have been something like it. But it didn't make it any pleasanter to have him suggest his surprise. And I don't know that I need feel particularly flattered at his singling me out for praise because I

choose to help myself rather than be wholly dependent—I've always been partly so. It isn't a thing, as you say, that I deserve the least credit for."

"I never said that about you," protested Marian, "and I do think it's a credit to you—or would be, if there were any necessity for it."

"Any necessity for it?"

"I *will* speak now," cried Marian, "hospitable or inhospitable; and I don't see how it has anything to do with it." Helen understood perfectly that these enigmatical sentences were the report, so far as they went, of some discussion between Marian and her husband, and that she was now about to break some promise she had made him out of half-conviction. "Do you expect, Helen Harkness, to go back to that horrid shanty, and spend the rest of your life in making servants' bonnets?"

"Yes—till I have learnt how to do better work."

"Well, then, I think it's a shame!" Helen drew herself up, but Marian did not quail. "I think that you might have had some little consideration for us—for all your friends, if you had none for yourself. Why should it have been any more disgraceful to accept help from papa—from your father's old friend, who felt towards you just as he does towards his own children—than to take up such work as that? If it comes to that, why shouldn't you be dependent upon us, as well as dependent on them?"

"I'm *not* dependent on them," said Helen, "and you have no right to say such a thing, Marian." But she felt herself physically unable to cope with

Marian's misrepresentation, or the no-reasons with which she supported it.

"I say it for your good, and to let you see how it appears to others. It will kill you to go back there. I can't bear to think of it."

"It won't kill me," answered Helen sadly, "but I shouldn't be frightened by that if it were true. Why do you think I should be so anxious to live?"

"Helen!"

"Yes,—seriously. What is there left for me in this world?"

"There 's everything—if you would see it so."

"Everything?"

"Helen," said Marian, dropping her hands, with the sewing in them, into her lap, "you force me to break one of the most solemn promises I ever made in my life. But I don't care; if I can do any good by it, I will break it. And I want you to understand that I speak entirely on my own responsibility, and quite against Ned's advice and orders. We saw a great deal of Lord Rainford while we were in England, and everything we saw made us like him more and more."

Helen feebly put herself on the defensive, but without saying anything, and Marian continued—

"He 's very greatly improved, in every way. He 's better, and he 's better-looking."

"I thought him improved the last time he was here," said Helen impartially.

"He 's the kind of man who doesn't show to advantage out of his own surroundings," returned Marian,

pursuing her apparent advantage. "We visited him at one of his places, in the country: an old house of the fifteenth century, that kings and queens had slept in, and that had been in his family almost as long as it had been built. You never saw such a place, Helen! There wasn't much of a park, but there were groups and avenues of beautiful old trees all about, and lawns so fine and close, that it seemed as if they had been woven and laid down there just for our visit; ivy all over the front of the house, and such gardens, with peaches and pears and roses trained along their high walls—just like Tennyson's poems; and an exquisite *keeping* about everything that I never could make you understand unless you had been there. But everything was so fit that you felt as if that low English sky was part of the place, and the arrangement of the clouds had been studied for it. There wasn't a jar or a hitch in anything, and Lord Rainford himself came in in such a way that you would have thought he was as much a guest as ourselves."

"Yes," assented Helen; "I suppose they've brought the art of all that to perfection."

"It isn't an *art* with them; it's nature—second nature. This was only one of his places—the smallest of them,—but there wasn't the least effect of ownership about him; and it wasn't from him, you may be sure, that we found out the good he was doing!"

"No; I could imagine that. He must find a great happiness in it. I 'm glad—"

"Oh, he didn't seem very happy. Not that he

made any parade of melancholy. But you can tell whether such a man is happy or not, without his saying so, or looking so, even."

Helen was silent, and Marian made a bold push. "You know what I mean, Helen, perfectly well. He didn't speak to me about it, but he told Ned everything, and Ned told me; and I don't believe he 's forgotten you, or ever will."

"He had better, then," said Helen, with a momentary firmness. "He must."

"Didn't you tell him that if you were not engaged—"

"Oh, did he say that? Then don't talk to me of his delicacy, Marian! It was shameful to repeat it."

"What nonsense! Mightn't he say it, if he were asking Ned whether he thought you really would have cared for him if you hadn't been?"

"Did he ask that?"

"I don't know. But if he had, would it have been anything so very strange? Not half so strange as your saying it if you didn't mean it. Why *did* you say it, Helen?"

"You know well enough, Marian. Because I felt sorry for him; because I had to say something. Did Ned—did Mr. Ray encourage him to think that I meant—"

"Of *course* he didn't. He never ventured a word about it. He seems to think, like all the rest of us, *except* me, that you 're a very peculiar kind of porcelain, with none of the flaws of common clay, and I can't persuade him you 're a girl like other girls.

But if you come to the common sense of the matter, I don't see why Lord Rainford shouldn't have supposed you meant what you said, and that when it was all over—"

"Marian!"

"—Why he shouldn't have begun to have some hopes again. I'm speaking for your good, Helen, and I'm going to speak plainly. I *don't* see why you shouldn't marry him now! If you have no pity for yourself, if you *prefer* to go on with the wretched life you've planned, I don't see why you shouldn't have a little compassion for him. You're spoiling his life as well as your own."

Helen had to struggle from under the crushing weight of this charge by an effort that resulted in something like levity. "Oh, I don't know that it's spoiling his life. He seemed to care for me as an element of social and political reform, and wanted to marry me because I illustrated a theory. Perhaps, if you told him I didn't really illustrate it, he would be quite willing to accept the situation!"

She left Marian where she was sitting, and the subject—for that day. But the next week Ray went off to town by a train earlier than usual one morning, and Marian went restlessly about the house. The moment she found herself alone with Helen, she began abruptly: "Helen, I won't have you thinking it's the same thing, my talking to you the other day about Lord Rainford, as it would be if Robert Fenton had lived."

"No," said Helen, recognising the fact that it had seemed so to her.

"I wish to talk as if he never had lived."

"You can't do that!"

"Yes, I can; for now it *is* the same, so far as Lord Rainford is concerned. If you said anything to make him believe that it would have been different if you had not been engaged, then you owe him another chance. If you ever did or said anything to encourage him—'

"Encourage him!"

"Without knowing it— But you can't deny that he might have thought you encouraged him deliberately that first day—"

"No," said Helen, with a guilty sense that did not suffer her to protest against Marian's cruelty in going back to that.

"Then I say you *must* listen to him. Helen, I'm speaking entirely for your good. I didn't like him at first, either; but now I know how nice he really is. I *do* want you to reconsider! You would be happy with him; he would make any woman happy, and he would be simply in heaven with you. And you're adapted to the life you would lead in England. You could be fashionable or unfashionable, just as you liked; and if you wanted to be useful, to do good, and that sort of thing, you'd have every chance in the world. You'd be a great success, Helen, in every way. I do *want* America to be well represented over there! And don't you see what a great thing his offering himself to you is? It's almost unprece-

dented! I hardly know any other American girl who hasn't been married for her money in Europe; they're *always* married for their money, even by cheap little continental counts and barons; and for an English lord to marry a *poor* American girl, why, it's like an American man marrying a woman of rank, and that *never* was heard of! I want you to look at it on all sides, Helen; and that's the reason I'm almost perjuring myself in talking to you of it at all. I did promise Ned so solemnly; but if I didn't speak now, I shouldn't have another chance before—"

She suddenly stopped herself, and Helen, who had been borne down by her tide of words, lifted her head again: "Before what, Marian?"

"Before he comes!" cried Marian hysterically. "He's coming here to-day!"

Helen rose. "Then I must go," she said quietly. "It would be indelicate, it would be indecent, for me to be here. I wonder, Marian, you could set such a trap for me."

Marian forgave the offensive charge to Helen's excitement. "Trap," she repeated. "Do you call it a trap, when I might have let him come without saying a word to you? I *wanted* to do it! And I should have had a perfectly good excuse; for we didn't know ourselves that he was coming, till this morning. He wrote us from New York, and he started for Boston last night. I didn't even know he was in the country—indeed I didn't!" she added, beginning to quail, woman as she was, under the awfulness of the reproach in Helen's eyes. "We couldn't tell

him not to come! How could we tell him not to come? There wasn't even time!"

"Yes," said Helen brokenly, "I know. I don't blame you. But you see that I can't stay."

"No, I don't," retorted Marian, "I don't see anything of the kind."

"It would be shameful—it would be a trap for *him*."

"He 's a man, and he 'll never dream of such a thing; he 's a gentleman, and he *won't* think so!"

"But *I* shall," returned Helen definitively. "It will look as if I had been waiting for him here; as if I wished to see him. It leaves me no freedom; it binds me hand and foot. If he spoke to me again, what *could* I say? Don't you see, Marian?"

"No, I don't," said Marian. But she denied with her lips only.

"No matter; it 's quite time I was back with Margaret. I will get ready, and go up to Boston at once."

"Helen! And when he 's crossed the ocean to see you?"

"If he 's done that, it 's all the more reason why I shouldn't see him. He had no right to come. It was very presumptuous; it was unfeeling."

"You encouraged him to believe that if you had not been engaged to Robert Fenton you would have accepted him. What was he to think? Perhaps he felt that, as a gentleman, he was *bound* to come."

Helen panted breathless. "I must go away," was all she could say at last.

"Oh, very well!" cried Marian. "You see how awkward you make it for us."

"I know. I'm very sorry. But I can't help it. How soon do you expect him?"

"Ned went up to Boston to meet him. I don't know which train they'll be down on," returned Marian coldly.

"Then there isn't a moment to be lost," said Helen, hurrying to the door. "Will you let Jerry take me to the station?" she asked formally.

"Oh, certainly," replied Marian, with equal state.

A few minutes later Mrs. Butler came to Helen's room, her gentle eyes full of sympathetic trouble. "Marian is feeling terribly. *Must* you go, dear?"

"Why, yes, Mrs. Butler. Don't you see that I must?" returned Helen, without desisting from her packing, while Mrs. Butler sank upon a chair near the trunk.

"Yes, of course; Marian sees it too; if you are fully resolved not to—to give him any hope. But she thought—we all thought—that perhaps—. Helen, dear, I don't wish to pry into your affairs; I have no right—"

"Oh, Mrs. Butler!" cried Helen, dropping an armful of clothes chaotically into her trunk, in order that she might give the tears, with which she was bedewing them, free course upon Mrs. Butler's neck, "you have all the right in the world. Say anything you please to me; ask anything! How should I take it wrong?"

"There's nothing I wish to ask, dear. If you're

quite firm—if your mind is *entirely* made up—there 's nothing to say. I wouldn't urge you to anything. But we all have such a regard for him that if you should—. It seemed such a fortunate way out of all your struggles and sorrows—"

"And Robert? Do *you* ask me to forget him, Mrs. Butler, so soon?"

"Oh, no, my dear! I should be the last to do that! But wives lose their husbands and husbands their wives, and marry again. They don't forget their dead; but in this world we can't live for the dead; we must live for the living. Don't look at it as if it were forgetting him or betraying him in any way. As long as you live—you *must* understand that—he can be nothing to you!"

"Oh, I *do* understand it," sobbed the girl. "My heart has ached it all out, long ago, and night and day I know it. And that 's what makes me wish I were dead too."

Mrs. Butler ignored this outburst. "And this young man is so good—and he is so true to you—"

"Oh, is that the reason I should be untrue to myself?"

"No, dear, it isn't any question of that. It 's merely a question of examining yourself about it, of making sure of your own mind when you see him again. The children are all romantic about it because it 's a title, and they like to think of a splendid marriage for you; but if it were only that, I should be very sorry. I've seen enough of splendid marriages, and I know what risks American girls take

when they marry out of their own country, and their own kind of thinking and living. But this isn't the same thing, Helen—indeed it isn't. He likes you *because* you 're American, and *because* you 're poor; and the last thing he thinks of is his title. No, dear. If he were some penniless young American, he couldn't be any better or simpler. Mr. Butler and I both agreed about that."

"Captain Butler!" cried Helen, with the tragedy of *Et tu, Brute*, in her tones, and the effect of preparing to fall with dignity.

"Yes. He says he never saw any young man whom he liked better. They formed quite a friendship. He was very sweet and filial with Mr. Butler; and was always making him talk about you!"

A throe of some kind passed through Helen, and the arm round Mrs. Butler's neck tightened convulsively.

"I never approved," continued the elder lady, "of what people call marrying for a home; but I thought —we all thought—that if, when you saw him again, you felt a little differently about everything, it would be such an easy way out of all your difficulties. We approve—all of us—of your spirit, Helen; we quite understand how you shouldn't wish to be dependent, and we admire your courage and self-respect, and all that; but we *don't* like to see you working so hard—wearing your pretty young life away, wasting your best days in toil and sorrow."

"Oh, Mrs. Butler! the sorrow was sent, I don't know why; but the work was sent to save me. If

it were not for that I should have gone mad long ago!"

"But couldn't anything else save you, Helen? That's what we want you to ask yourself. Can't you let the sunlight come back to you—"

"No, no!" cried Helen, with hysterical self-pity; "I must dwell in the valley of the shadow of death all my life. There is no escape for me. I'm one of those poor things that I used to wonder at—people always in black, always losing friends, always carrying gloom and discouragement to every one. You must let me go. Let me go back to my work and my poverty. I will never leave it again. Don't ask me. Indeed, indeed, it can't be; it mustn't be! For pity's sake, don't speak of it any more!"

Mrs. Butler rose and pressed the girl to her heart in a motherly embrace. "I won't, dear," she said, and went out of the room.

Helen heard her encounter some one who had just come up the stairs, at the head of which a briefly-murmured colloquy took place, and she heard in Jessie Butler's penetrating whisper: "Will she stay? Will she accept him? Is she going to be Lady Rainford? Oh, I hope—"

"Hush, Jessie!" came in Mrs. Butler's whisper, and then there was a scurry of feet along the matting, and a confusion of suppressed gaiety, as if the girls were running off to talk it over among themselves.

Helen would not make allowance for the innocent romance it was to them. She saw it only as a family conspiracy that the Butlers ought all to have been

ashamed of, and she began again to pack her trunk with a degree of *hauteur* which, perhaps, never before attended such a task. Her head was in a whirl, but she worked furiously for a half-hour, when she found herself faint, and was forced to lie down. She would have liked to ring and ask for a biscuit and a glass of wine; but she would not, she could not consent to add the slightest thing to that burden of obligation towards the Butlers which she now found so odious, and on which they had so obviously counted, to control her action and force her will.

She lay on the bed, growing more and more bitter against them, and quite helpless to rise. She heard a carriage grate up to the door on the gravel outside, and she flung a shawl over her head to shut out the voices of Ray and Lord Rainford; she felt that if she heard them she must shriek; and she cried to herself that she was trapped, trapped, trapped!

Some one knocked lightly at her door, and Marian entered in answer to a reckless invitation from the pillow. It seemed an intolerable piece of effrontery, and Helen wondered that Marian was able to put on that air of cold indifference in proposing to ask her to come down and meet Lord Rainford before he had been in the house ten minutes.

"Helen," said Marian, in a stiff tone of offence, "Mrs. Wilson is here, and wants you to come over and take lunch with her. I couldn't do less than promise to give you her message. Shall I say that you 're lying down with a headache?"

"Oh, not at all, Marian," said Helen; "there 's

nothing the matter with me. I'm perfectly well. Please tell Mrs. Wilson that I shall be very glad to come, and that I'll be down directly."

She was already twisting up her hair before the glass with a vigour of which she could not have believed herself capable. But the idea of flight, of escape, inspired her; in that moment she could have fought her way through overwhelming odds of Butlers; her lax nerves were turned to steel. "Marian," she said, "I will ask Mrs. Wilson to drive me to the station this afternoon, and I'll be very glad if you can send my trunk there."

"Oh, certainly," said Marian.

"I know I'm making it horrid for you," added Helen, beginning to relent a little, now that she felt herself safe, "but I can't help it. I must go, and I must go at once. But Mrs. Wilson is such a kind old thing, and she's asked me so often, and I can easily make her understand that I must come now or not at all, and if she knows that you're expecting other people your letting me go to her for lunch the last day won't seem strange."

"Oh, not at all," said Marian, with a slight laugh, whose hollowness was lost upon Helen.

Mrs. Butler said she was to come and visit them as soon as they got back to town; she kissed her as lovingly as ever, and the Captain was affectionately acquiescent; but the young girls were mystified, and Marian was cold. Helen tried to make it up to her by redoubled warmth in parting; but this was not to be done, and as soon as she was out of the house

she began to feel how ungracious she had been to Marian, who had certainly done everything she could, and had behaved very honourably and candidly. In the undercurrent of reverie which ran along evenly with Mrs. Wilson's chat, she atoned to Marian with fond excuses and explanations, and presently she found herself looking at the affair from the Butlers' point of view. It did not then appear so monstrous; she relented so far as to imagine herself, for their sake and for Lord Rainford's, consenting to what seemed so right and fit to them. She saw herself, in pensively luxurious fancy, the lady of all that splendid circumstance at which Marian had hinted, moving vaguely on through years of gentle beneficence and usefulness, chivalrously attended in her inalienable sadness by her husband's patient and forbearing devotion; giving him, as she could from a heart never his, and now broken, respect and honour that might warm before her early death to something like tenderness. It was a picture that had often been painted in romance, and it satisfied her present mood as well as if its false drawing and impossible colour were true to any human life that had ever been or could be.

By the time she reached Mrs. Wilson's cottage Ray drove up to the Butlers', and met the surmise of his wife and sisters-in-law with monosyllabic evasion till he could be alone with Marian. "I didn't bring him," he explained then, "because the more I thought of it the less I liked our seeming to trap Helen into meeting him."

"Oh, indeed!" said Marian. "That was her own word!"

"Then you told her? I might have expected that. Well, it was quite right. What did she say?"

"Everything unpleasant that she very well could. You would have thought that really we had taken the most unfair advantage of her, and had placed her where she couldn't say no, if she wished."

"I could see how it might look that way to her," said Ray, "and that's what I was afraid of. It was extremely awkward, every way. We couldn't very well tell him not to come, and we couldn't very well tell her to go; the only thing I was clear of was that we must tell her he was coming, and let her decide upon her own course."

"That's what I did, and she decided very quickly —she's gone."

Ray looked worried. "It's tantamount to turning her out of doors, I suppose, and yet I don't know what else we could have done. Well! I might as well have brought him straight here, and saved myself all the diplomacy of getting old Wilson to take him home for the night."

Marian did not for the present ask what was the diplomacy which Ray had used. "Mr. Wilson!" she shrieked. "You got *Mr. Wilson* to take him home for the night?"

"Yes," returned her husband quietly. "What is so very remarkable about my getting *Wilson* to do it?"

She did not answer, but burst from her door with a cry for Mrs. Butler that brought all her sisters also. "Mother, Lord Rainford has gone home with Mr. Wilson!"

Mrs. Butler was dumb with sensation that silenced all her daughters but Jessie. This young lady, not hitherto noted in the family for her piety, recognised a divine intention in the accident: "*I* call it a special Providence!" she exclaimed ecstatically.

"What is it all about?" inquired Ray.

"Oh, nothing," replied his wife. "Nothing at all! Merely that Helen was in such haste to get away that she accepted an invitation to lunch with Mrs. Wilson, and has just driven over there with her. I suppose she'll accuse us of having plotted with the Wilsons to 'trap' her, as she calls it."

"Marian!" said Mrs. Butler, with grave reproach.

"I don't care, mother!" retorted Marian, with tears of vexation in her eyes. "Can't you see that she'll accept him over there, and that I shall be cheated out of having brought them together, when I had set my heart on it so much? I didn't suppose Helen Harkness *could* be such a goose, after all she's been through!"

"My dear," said her mother, "I don't wish you to speak so of Helen; and as for her accepting him—Children," she broke off to the younger girls, "run away!" and they obeyed as if they had really been children. "Edward," she resumed, "how in the world *did* you contrive with Lord Rainford?"

"Well, Mrs. Butler," said Ray, "with men, there was only one way. He had told me so much, you know, that I could take certain things for granted, and I made a clean breast of it at last, on the way home. I told him she was here, and that I thought it wasn't quite fair bringing him into the house

without giving her some chance to protest—or escape."

"It was terrible," said Mrs. Butler, "but I see that you had to do it. Go on."

"And he quite agreed with me, that it wouldn't be fair to either of them. I don't know that I should have spoken if I had not seen old Wilson in the car. I asked him if he wouldn't give Rainford a bed for the night; and he was only too glad. That's all. I told him he could walk over here this evening, and meet her on equal terms."

"That won't be necessary now," said Marian bitterly. "I congratulate you on the success of your diplomacy, Ned!"

"Perhaps it *is* providential, as Jessie says," murmured Mrs. Butler.

"Oh, *very* providential!" cried Marian. "It's as if it had all been arranged by the providence of the theatre. I *hate* it! Instead of taking place romantically and prettily, among her old friends, she's obliged it to take place fancically, by a vulgar accident, where there can be nothing pleasant about it."

"Why, Marian," said her mother. "Do you think she will accept him?"

"Accept him? Of *course* she will! She is dying to do it—I could see that all the time—and I could hardly have patience with her for not seeing it herself. She's old enough."

"Well, never mind about that," said Ray, authoritatively. "We have done what we all saw to be right, and we must let the consequences take care of themselves."

"Oh, it's very easy to say that," cried Marian. "But, for my part, I'm sorry I did right."

"Well, your doing wrong in this case wouldn't have helped. My doing right alone was enough to put everything at sixes and sevens."

XIX.

A SERIES of trivial chances brought Helen and Lord Rainford together alone, before she could get away from the Wilsons' after lunch. The first train for town did not start till three, and it was impossible that she should shut herself up in her room and avoid him until that time. In fact she found that there was nothing in his mere presence that forced her to any such defensive measure, while there was much in the fatal character of the situation, as there is in every inevitable contingency, to calm if not to console her; and the sense of security that came from meeting him by accident, where she was perfectly free to say no, and could not seem by the remotest possible implication to have invited an advance from him, disposed her in his favour. They met certainly with open surprise, but their surprise was not apparently greater than that of the Wilsons in bringing their guests together; and when Mr. Wilson explained that he owed the pleasure of Lord Rainford's company for the night to a domestic exigency at the Butlers', Helen divined that Ray's thoughtfulness had given her this chance of escape, and wondered if Lord Rainford was privy to it. But he was listening with his head down to Mrs.

Wilson's explanation of the chance that had given them the pleasure of Miss Harkness's company; she wondered if he were wondering whether she knew that he was coming and had fled on that account; but it was impossible to guess from anything he said or looked, and she began to believe that Ray had not told him she was with them. With impartial curiosity she took note of the fact that his full-grown beard had unquestionably improved his chin; it appeared almost as if something had been done for his shoulders; certainly his neck was not so long; or else she had become used to these traits, and they did not affect her so much as formerly. More than once during the lunch she thought him handsome; it was when his face lighted up in saying something pleasant about seeing America again. He pretended that even twenty-four hours of American air had made another man of him. Mr. Wilson said that he did not know that there had been any American air for a week, and Lord Rainford said that he did not mind the heat; he believed he rather liked it.

"But you certainly haven't got it to complain of here," he added.

"Oh, no, it's always cool on the North Shore," Mrs. Wilson explained. "We shall not let you go home this afternoon, Miss Harkness," she turned to say to Helen: "you would certainly perish in Cambridge."

"Port," added Helen, with inflexible conscience; she never permitted herself or any one else the flattering pretence that she lived in Old Cambridge. "You must," she continued quietly. "I've made all my preparations." This fact was final with a

woman, and Mrs. Wilson could only make a murmur of distress, and beg her at least to go by a later train, but Helen was firm also about the train; she said her trunk would be at the station, and she must go then. If she had her formless intention that this should be discouraging to Lord Rainford, she could see no such effect in him; he remained unmoved, and she began to question whether at sight of her he might not have lost whatever illusion he had cherished concerning her. She said to herself that she knew she had changed, that she had grown older and thinner, and plainer every way. If this were so, it was best; she hoped—with a pang—that it was so. She ought to have thought of it before; it might have saved her from giving Marian pain. Of course he had entirely ceased to care for her.

After lunch Mr. Wilson betrayed signs of heaviness, which obliged his wife to the confession that nothing could keep Mr. Wilson awake after lunch. She sent him away for his nap, and she was going to lead her guests down over the lawn for a look at the sea from the rocks by the shore, when a servant came with some inexorable demand upon her.

"You know the way, Miss Harkness," she said. "Take Lord Rainford down there, and I will be with you in a moment."

She hurried away with the maid, and Helen descended the piazza steps and sauntered past the beds of foliage-plants across the grass with her charge. He did not leave her in a moment's doubt of his mind or purpose after they were beyond hearing.

"Do you know why I have come back?" he

asked abruptly, and striving to catch the eyes she averted.

"How should I—" she began, but he spared her the sin of even an insinuated ignorance.

"I came back for you," he said with a straightforward sincerity that shamed her out of all evasion.

"Then I am sorry for that," she replied frankly, "for you had better have forgotten me."

"That wasn't possible. I couldn't have forgotten you when I knew you were not free; how could I forget you now? For the last year my life has been a count of days, hours, minutes. If I have come too soon, tell me, and I will go away till you let me come again. I can wait!"

He spoke with the strength but not the vehemence of his passion, and she stayed her fluttered nerves against his quiet. If it were to be reasonably talked over, and dismissed like any other impossibility, it would be very simple; she liked him for making it so easy; she felt humbly grateful to him; she imagined that she could reconcile him to his fate.

"You must forgive me," he added, "if what I say is painful. I will spend my life in atoning for it."

"There is nothing to forgive on *my* part. If you can have patience with me."

"Patience?"

"Oh, I don't mean what you think!"

"I hope I haven't seemed impatient. I couldn't excuse myself if I had. No one could have respected, revered your bereavement more than I; and if I thought that I had sinned against it in coming now—"

"No—no—"

"It seemed to me that I had a kind of warrant —permission—in something you said—something, nothing—that took away all hope and then became my hope—"

"Oh," she trembled, "what *did* I say?"

"Nothing," he said, "if you remember nothing. I abide by what you say now."

She was thrilled with an æsthetic delight in his forbearance, and with a generous longing to recognise it. "I know what you mean, and I blame myself more than any words can say for letting you suppose— It was my culpable weakness— I only meant to save you—to spare you all I could!" A dismay came into his face that she could not endure to see. "Oh, *don't* look so! Did you—did you really come back on account of that?"

"I misunderstood you—I see. Not perhaps at first; but afterwards. I came back because I thought you told me that if you had been free you might have answered me differently then."

"Yes, that's what the words *said;* but not what they *meant!*" She silently grieved for him, walking a little apart, and not daring to lift her eyes to his face. He would not speak, and she had perforce to go on. "*Why* did you ever care for me?" she implored at last, rushing desperately at the question, as if there might be escape on that side.

"Why?" he echoed.

"Surely, the first time we met—what was there to make you even endure me?"

"Endure?" He seemed to reflect. "I don't think you were to blame. But it never was a question of that. You—you were my fancy. I can't

tell you better than that. And you have always been so. It isn't for what you did; it isn't for what you said."

It seemed hopeless. They walked on, and they only ceased from walking because they had reached the brink of the rocks beyond which lay the sea. She stood there looking on its glassy levels, which shivered against the rocks at her feet in impulses that were like her own feeble and broken purposes. In a certain way life was past with her; there could be no more of what had been, no longer the romantic tenderness, the heroic vision of love; but there could be honour, faith, affection. The sense of this passed vaguely through her heart, and exhaled at her lips in a long, hopeless sigh.

At the light sound he spoke again. "But I didn't come back to make good any claim upon you. I came to see you again because I must, and because it seemed as if I had the privilege of speaking once more to you. But perhaps I haven't."

"Oh, certainly, you have that!" she weakly assented.

"I don't urge you to anything. I only tell you again that I love you, and that I believe I always shall. But I don't ask your answer now or at any given time. I can wait your will, and I can abide by it then, whatever your answer is."

A heavy weight was on her tongue, which hindered her from making her answer "No." A ship lagging by in the offing as if it panted with full sails for every breath of the light breeze, the whole spectacle of the sea, intimated a reproach, poignant as fleeting and intangible. She felt herself drifting

beyond her own control, and any keeping would be better than none; she longed for rest, for shelter; she no longer cared for escape. There was no reason why she should refuse the love offered her. She could not doubt its truth; its constancy even charmed her a little; she was a little in love,—pensively, reluctantly,—with a love for herself so steadfast, so patient, so magnanimous. The sense of her own insufficiency to herself, the conviction that after all, and at the very most, she was a half success only even in the sordid and humiliating endeavour which was the alternative, unnerved her.

"Oh, what shall I say?" she asked herself; and then looked up in terror lest she had uttered the words. But she had not. He met her inquiring glance only with a look of sympathy, in which perhaps the hope suggested by her hesitation was beginning to dawn. She appealed to him against himself.

"I wish you had not come back. You have made a great mistake."

His countenance fell again.

"A mistake?"

"Yes, you are mistaken in me. I'm not at all what you think me. If I were that, I shouldn't be here, now, begging you for mercy. If I were not so foolish, so fickle-minded, that no words can describe me, *he* would never have left me; he would have been alive and with me. Oh!" she cried, "I can't let any one else trust me or believe in me for an instant. It isn't as if I were bereft in any common way; it's as if I had killed him!"

Lord Rainford remained so little moved by this assumption of guilt that she added, "Ah, I see you won't believe me!"

"No," he said. "I understood something of that from Ray; and if I hoped only to be your friend—if I knew I was never to see you again—I should still say that you were wrong in blaming yourself now; that you were right then in wishing to make sure of yourself before you married him. It would have been unjust to him to have done less."

"Oh, does it seem so to you?" she implored. "That was the way it seemed to me then."

"And it ought always to seem so. If you've made it my privilege to speak to you of this matter—"

"Oh, yes, yes!"

"Then I say that I think what you did in that matter ought to be your greatest consolation now. It may be one of those eccentricities which people have found in my way of thinking, but I can't feel less reverently towards marriage than that."

He had never seemed so noble, so lovable even, as at that moment. Her heart turned toward him in a fervent acceptance of the comfort, the support he offered her; it thanked him and rejoiced in him; but it was heavy again with its former dismay when he said, "I don't urge you to any decision. Remember I am always yours, whether you refuse me or not."

She perceived then that it was not really a question of her and Robert, but of her and Lord Rainford, and that the decision to which he did not urge her must rest finally with her. If she could have been taken from herself without her own

consent, passively, negatively, it would have been another affair.

She gathered herself together as best she could. "I am acting very weakly, very wrongly. I've no excuse but that this is all a surprise to me. I didn't know you were in this country. I didn't dream of ever meeting you again till three hours ago, when Mrs. Ray told me you were coming. Then I ran away from her to avoid meeting you. Yes, I had better be frank! It seemed horrible to me that I should meet you in her house; you could never have believed that I hadn't wished to meet you."

"That's what I should be glad to believe, if I could. But I saw—I agreed with Ray—that it might not be leaving you quite free in every way; and so I was glad to accept his suggestion that I should come here first till something could be arranged—till you could be told."

"That was like Mr. Ray," interrupted Helen. "I see how it has all happened; and oh, I'm so sorry it's happened!"

The young man turned pale. But he answered courageously, "I'm not. I had to know whether there was any hope for me; I had to know it from you."

"Yes," she assented, moved by his courage.

"And I should not have gone away without at least making sure that there is none, and that is all I ask you now."

"But if I can't tell you? I must wait—I must think. You must give me time."

"Did I seem to be impatient?" he asked with exquisite deference and protest.

"No. It must have been my own impatience—I don't know what—and you mustn't try to see me again—unless—" A deep blush dyed her face. She had put some paces between them, with a sort of nervous dread that he might offer his hand in parting. She now said abruptly, "Good-bye," and turned and ran up toward the house, leaving him on the rocks by the sea.

Mrs. Wilson met her half-way across the lawn. "I was coming to join you," she began.

"Lord Rainford is there," said Helen. "Mrs. Wilson, I find that I must see Mrs Ray again before I go to town. Could you let them drive me across, and then to the station?"

"Why, certainly," said Mrs. Wilson in the national terms of acquiescence.

XX.

At first Fenton's arrival on the island had seemed, like the breaking of the steamer's shaft, the storm, the shipwreck, the escape to the reef, and the voyage in the open boat, one step in a series in which there was no arrest, and in which there was at least the consolation of movement from point to point. But this consolation ceased with his last glimpse of the sail, in which all hope of escape fainted and died; and it did not revisit him when he gathered courage to explore the fairy solitude of the atoll. It was so small as to have been abandoned even by the savages of those seas, who forsake their over-peopled islands, and wander from reef to reef in search of other homes, and it would never be visited from the world to which he had belonged. The whalers that sometimes stop for water at the coral islands would not touch at this little point of land, lifted, like a flower among its thorns, above those perilous rocks. It had probably never been laid down on any chart; in a century which had explored every part of the globe, it must be a spot unknown to civilised men. The soil showed like snow through the vegetation that thinly covered it, and the perpetual green on white repeated itself

in the trailing vines that overran the coral blocks, with narrow spaces of sea between, which Fenton leaped, in his round of the island, to find himself again and again on the white soil of the groves, through which the palm struck its roots, and anchored itself fast to the reef. At the highest point the land rose fifteen feet above the sea; at the widest place it measured a hundred yards; and if he had fetched a compass of the whole, he would have walked less than two miles. They should not starve; the palms would yield them abundant fruit through the unvarying year; the sea, he knew, was full of fish. As he emerged from the grove at the point at which he had started, Giffen called out to him, "What 's that on the tree right by your shoulder?" Fenton looked round, and the bright blossom near him turned into a bird. He put out his hand; it did not move; and when he lifted it from its perch, it rested fearlessly on his palm. He flung it from him with a sickening sensation, and Giffen came running towards him.

"Hallo! what 's the matter?" demanded Fenton.

"I thought mebbe it was poison!"

"There 's nothing to kill us here," Fenton replied. "Come, we must begin to live."

The sailors had left behind the remnant of the bag of flour, and the peas and beans. Giffen had carried them up to the hut, and one day Fenton found that he had made a garden and planted it with them. They came up quickly, and then, as if the soil lacked vitality, they withered away, all but a vine sprung from a seed that Giffen found among the peas.

He tenderly cherished this vine, which he hoped would prove a musk-melon, or at least a cucumber; in due time it turned out a gourd. "My luck," he said, and gathered his gourds, for drinking-cups.

In the maze which had deepened upon Fenton, the whole situation had an unreality, as of something read long ago, and half-forgotten, and now slowly recalled, point by point; and there were moments of the illusion in which it was not he who was imprisoned there on that unknown island, but the hero of adventures whom he had envied and admired in boyhood, or known in some romance of later life. The gun and the cartridges which they treasured so carefully after they found traces of a former savage habitation; the tools which they had brought from the wreck, and which they used in shaping the timbers for their hut; the palm-leaves they plucked for its thatch; the nuts they gathered for their food and drink; the fishing-lines they twisted from the fibre of the cocoa-bark; the hooks they carved from the bones of the birds they ate, and the traps they set for game when the wild things once so tame began to grow wary; their miserable economies of clothing; the rude arts by which they fashioned plates from shells, and cooking utensils from the clay they found in sinking their well; the vats they made to evaporate the sea-water for its salt: all these things seemed the well-worn properties and stock experiences of the castaways of fiction; he himself the figment of some romancer's brain, with which the author was toying for the

purposes of his plot, to be duly rescued and restored to the world when it should serve the exigency of the tale. Once when this notion was whimsically repeating itself to Fenton in the silence and solitude, it brought a smile to his haggard face, and when Giffen asked him what the matter was, he told him.

"No," said Giffen, "it ain't much like *us*."

That two modern men should be lost out of a world so knit together with telegraphs and railroads and steamships, that it seemed as if a whisper at any point must be audible at all others, was too grotesque a fact, too improbable for acceptance. It was not like them, and it was not like any one he could think of, and when he tried to imagine some contemporary and acquaintance in his case, it became even more impossible than when he supposed it of himself.

There were ironical moods in which he amused himself with the carefully ascertained science of the story-tellers as he recalled it, and in which he had a fantastic interest in noting how near and yet how far from the truth their study came. But there were other times when the dreary sense of the hackneyed character of the situation overpowered him, and he dropped his work and lay with his face in the sand, helpless and hopeless for hours, sick of the repetition of such stale inventions. There was no greater reality in it all, when he recalled the narratives of men actually cast away on desert islands, though there were moments when the sum of what they had suffered seemed to accumulate itself upon

his soul, and his heart and hand were heavy with their sorrows.

Yet in spite of all, the simple and wholesome conditions of his life were restoring him to physical health, which reacted upon his mind at last; and one morning he woke with a formless, joyful expectation that was like a hope. It was merely the habit of hope, reviving from a worn-out despair, but he sprang to his feet with a buoyancy of soul that he had not known since the storm first began to close round the Meteor.

Hitherto, the thought of Helen had been fruitless torment, which he banished when he could, but now, all at once, he found it an inspiration and an incentive; he thought of her gladly; she seemed to call him.

He left Giffen to kindle the fire for their breakfast, and ran down to the lagoon for a morning bath. The sun shone on a long black object that stretched across the main channel from the sea, and swimming out to it, he found it the trunk of a tree which had drifted to their island. With Giffen's help he got it inside of the reef, and floated it to their beach, and he could not rest till they had dragged it up out of the water. It was a message from the world they had lost, and the promise of rescue and return to it. At the bottom of his heart he knew that it might have drifted a thousand miles before it reached them, but it was as easy to believe that it came from land within a day's sail; it was of a timber unknown to the atolls; the pebbles that it held in the net-

work of its roots were from shores where there were hills and rivers, from peopled shores that they might reach if they had any craft in which they could venture to sea.

Giffen walked up and down beside the log, and examined it critically, stooping aside, and glancing at it as if to make sure of its soundness in every part.

"Well?" demanded Fenton.

"Chop it along the top, and shape it up at the ends, and dig it out; and maybe we can fix some sort of outrigger to it, like they use on their canoes around here. I've seen pictures of 'em."

He made the suggestion with melancholy diffidence; but Fenton caught at it eagerly. The wood was very hard, and it cost them weeks of labour, with the tools they had, before they were ready to launch their canoe upon the lagoon. But even in those placid waters, it proved hopelessly unseaworthy. Some fatal defect of construction, which their skill could not remedy, disabled it, and it capsized with Giffen, who was caught in the outrigger, and with difficulty saved from drowning by Fenton.

"Well, sir," he said, as he walked dripping to their hut, "we've got a lot of good firewood in that thing. I believe if you hadn't had me around, you could have made it go."

But the idea of escape had taken full possession of Fenton's mind, and the failure of the canoe turned it all upon another scheme which had begun to haunt it. They had kept a fire burning night and day ever since they had landed on the island, to attract the

notice of any ship that came in sight; but now Fenton determined to build a tower on the highest point, and light a beacon on it, so that no lookout on those seas could fail of the smoke by day or the flame by night.

"All right," assented Giffen, "it will kind of occupy our minds any way."

"Don't say that!" cried Fenton, with a pang.

"Well, I won't," returned Giffen penitently.

The tower was to be not only a beacon for friendly sail, but a refuge from wandering savages who caught sight of it. They must make it the centre of defences to which they could resort if they were attacked, and which they could hold against any such force as would probably land on their atoll.

Fenton drew a plan, and by nightfall they had dug the foundations of their fortress. They burnt some of the coral blocks, which they brought from the reef, for lime, and laid their walls strongly in mortar.

The days passed, and as they toiled together, Fenton had at last the heart to talk to his fellow-castaway of the world to which they were preparing to return. He found that to speak of his affairs in that world made it not only credible again, but brought it very near. He told Giffen that he was going to be married as soon as he got back to Boston, and that he was going to leave the navy, and try to get into some sort of business ashore. He described Helen to his comrade, and what she wore when he saw her last; and then he added, that she must be in black now, for she

had lost her father, who died very suddenly a few days after he sailed.

"I behaved badly," he added, with the feeling that always struggled for utterance when he thought of this, and which it was a relief to speak out now. "We had a misunderstanding, and I came off without saying good-bye to him."

"That was pretty rough," said Giffen. "But you can make it all right when you get back."

"Oh, it's all right now—with her," rejoined Fenton quickly.

"And with him too, I reckon," suggested his comrade.

"Yes, it must be," sighed Fenton. If the situation was in anywise incomprehensible to Giffen, he did not try to explore it. He remained deferentially content with what Fenton had volunteered, and he was sympathetically patient when Fenton tried to make him understand where Mr. Harkness's house was, by a plan of the Common, which he drew on a smooth surface of the plastered wall, with Park Street running up one side, and Beacon Street along the other, and Beacon Steps ascending from it into the quiet Place, where the house stood. He made a plot of the house, up-stairs and down, with the different rooms marked off: Helen's room at the front, Mr. Harkness's room; the room that he used to have when he came home from school; the parlours, and the library. He lingered fondly on the details; and then he mapped the whole town for Giffen, accurately placing the principal streets and squares and

public buildings. He marked the lines of railroad running out of the city, and the different depots. "This," he said, placing the Albany Station, "is where you would have to start for Kankakee. It's a little south of Chicago, isn't it?—on one of the lines from Chicago to St. Louis? There's a Kankakee line, isn't there?" He laughed for joy in the assent which seemed to confirm the existence of the places; the sound of the names alone re-established them. At times he stealthily glanced from this work at the rim of the sea, where, as he had been silently making-believe while he talked, there *must* be a sail. But he bore the inevitable disappointment patiently, and returned enthusiastically to his map; he projected another map in sections, on a larger scale, where the details could be more fully given.

Giffen did not speak much of his own life; it was nothing worth speaking of, he said; but sometimes at night he would drop a hint or scrap of his history from which Fenton could infer what remained unspoken. It was the career of a feeble nature, constantly pushed to the wall in the struggle of a new country. All his life, Giffen had failed; he had always had bad crops, bad partners, bad luck, hard times; if he went away from home to better his condition, he made it worse; when he came back he found that he would have done better to stay away. He bought on a rising market, and sold with the first fall in prices. When a crash came, it found him extended; the return of prosperity overtook him without money or credit. He had

tried all sorts of things with equal disaster: he had farmed, he had kept store, he had run a sawmill, he had been a book-agent, and agent for many patent rights. In any other country he would have remained quietly in some condition of humble dependence; but the unrest of the new world had infected him; he had spent his life in vain experiments, and his last venture had been the most ruinous of all. He had sold everything to get the means of going to China, and when the common calamity, that could scarcely be said to have blasted any hopes of his, overtook him, he was coming home little better than a beggar.

Even in that solitude he made Fenton his ideal, with the necessity that is in such natures to form themselves upon some other, and appreciated his confidence and friendship as gratefully as if they had been offered in the midst of men where he must have been chosen out of a multitude for Fenton's kindness. On his part, Fenton learned to admire the fineness of spirit which survived all circumstance in this poor fellow; and when his hopes were highest, he formed plans of doing something for Giffen in the world.

When they had finished their tower, and removed into it, he bade him make one more errand to the hut they had abandoned, and get fire to light the beacon.

Giffen refused. "No, sir; better not have any of *my* luck about it."

But he was off, early in the day that followed, to

cut wood for their beacon; and it was he who discovered that they could make the densest smoke by day in drying the fuel for the flame by night.

"Don't you think we ought to do something with that canoe again?" he asked one day.

"No, not yet," answered Fenton. "There 'll be time enough for that if the beacon doesn't succeed. But it will succeed." He formlessly felt the need of economising all the materials of hope within him. If he turned so soon from the beacon to some other device for escape, he knew that he must lose his faith in it, and he could not bear the thought of this loss. He was passionately devoting himself to the belief that it must bring a ship to their rescue. He divided the day and night into regular watches, and whenever he came to relieve Giffen, he questioned him closely as to every appearance of the sea; when he lay down to sleep he hastened to take upon himself the burden of disappointment with which he must wake, by saying to himself, "I know that he will not see anything." He contrived to postpone the anguish of his monotonous failure to conjure any sail out of the empty air by saying, as each week began, that now they must not expect to see anything for at least three days, or five days, or ten days to come. He invented reasons for these repeated procrastinations, but he was angry with Giffen for acquiescing in them; he tried to drive him into some question of them, by making them fantastic, and he was childishly happy when Giffen disputed them. Then he urged other and better reasons: if

it were fine, he said that nothing but stress of weather would bring them a ship, and that they could only hope for some vessel blown out of her course, like the Meteor; when it was stormy, he argued that any vessel sighting their beacon would keep away from it till the storm was past, but would be sure to come back then, and see what their fire meant.

"Yes," said Giffen, "but if we are going to keep that fire up at the rate we have for the last three months, we must begin to cut our cocoa palms."

"It isn't three months!" cried Fenton.

Giffen proved the fact by the reckoning he had kept on a block of coral in the tower: the tale of little straight marks, one for each day, was irrefutable.

"Why did you keep that count?" cried Fenton desperately. "Let the time go, I say, and the quicker it goes, and the sooner we are both dead, the better! Put out the fire; it's no use."

He left Giffen in the tower, and wandered away, as far away as the narrow bounds of his prison would permit. He stopped at a remote point of the island, which he had not visited since the first day when he had hastened to explore the atoll. The hoarse roaring of the surf, that beat incessantly upon the reef, filled the air; the sea was purple all round the horizon, and the sky blue above it; flights of tern and petrel wheeled and shrieked overhead: the sun shone, tempered by the delicate gale, and all things were as they had been half a year ago, as they must be half a year hence, and for ever. In a freak of the

idle curiosity that sometimes plays on the surface of our deepest and blackest moods, he descended the low plateau to look at a smoother and darker rock which showed itself at the point where the reef began to break away from the white sand. A growth of soft sea-mosses clothed the rock, and it had a fantastic likeness to a boat in shape. The mosses waved back and forth in the water; the rock itself appeared to move, and Fenton fell upon it, and clutched it, as if it had been some living thing struggling to escape him. He pulled it up on the sand, and then he sank down beside it, too weak to stir, too weak to cry out; the tears ran down his face, like the tears of a sick man's feebleness.

Giffen found him beside the boat, which they righted together without a word.

"Well, sir," he said at last, "I'm glad *you* found her." He went carefully over the places where it had been patched, with a solemn and critical scrutiny. "That's our boat," he added.

"Yes, I thought so," assented Fenton.

"And those fellows—"

Neither of them put into words his conjecture as to the fate of the men who had abandoned them: they accepted in silent awe the chance of escape which this fate, whatever it was, had given them; but late that night, when they lay hopefully sleepless in their tower, Giffen said, "I don't know as they meant to leave us for good. I reckon, if they'd got through all right, they'd have come back for us."

"Yes, we *must* believe that," replied Fenton.

How the boat had reached their atoll, and when, remained the secret of the power that had given it back to them. It was enough for them that the little craft was not beyond repair; it was thoroughly water-logged, and it must be some time before they could begin work upon it; but they spent this time in preparing material, and gathering provision for their voyage. They stocked it with nuts, and dried and salted fish sufficient to last them for six weeks; they filled Giffen's crop of gourds with water. "More of a tank than cucumbers or musk-melons would have been, after all; and better than cocoa-nuts," he quietly remarked. They were of one mind, whatever happened, never to return to their atoll; they had no other definite purpose; but they talked now as if their escape were certain.

"It stands to reason," said Giffen, "that it's meant for us to get back, or else this boat wouldn't have been sent for us;" and he began to plan a life as remote from the sea as he could make it. "When I put my foot on shore, I ain't going to stop walking till I get where salt water is worth six dollars a quart; yes, sir, I'm going to start with an oar on my shoulder; and when some fellow asks me what *that* thing is, I'm going to rest, and not before!"

They built a fire on the tower that would last all day and night, and then they set sail out of the lagoon, and through the breakers beyond the reef. The breeze was very light, but the sky was clear, with the promise of indefinite good weather; and before nightfall they saw the plumes of their palms form

themselves into the tufts into which they had grown from the points they had first discovered on the horizon; they became points again, and the night softly blotted them from the verge of the ocean.

They had neither compass nor sextant; under strange stars and alien constellations they were wandering as absolutely at the will of the winds and waves as any savages of those seas. For a while they saw the light of their beacon duller and paler on the waters where their island had been. This, too, died away, and the night fell round them on the illimitable sea.

Fenton stood the first watch, and when he gave the helm to Giffen, he simply bade him keep the boat before the wind. In the morning, when he took it, he asked if the wind had shifted or freshened, and still kept the boat before it. Toward sunset they sighted a series of points on the horizon, which, as they approached, expanded into the plumage of palms; the long white beach of an atoll grew from the water, and they heard faintly the thunder of the surf along the reef. It looked larger than their own island, and they scanned it anxiously for some sign of human life. But there were no huts under the palms, and no smoke rose above their fronds.

The breeze carried their boat toward the shore, and Fenton decided to pass the night on the atoll. If it were, as it looked, larger than the atoll they had abandoned, it must be known to navigation, and sooner or later it might be visited by ships for water; or the *bêche-de-mer*, which abounds in the larger

reefs, might bring American traders for a freight of the fish for China. They might find traces of European sojourn on the island, and perhaps some hint by which they could profit when they set sail again.

In the failing light, they stove their boat on the reef, but the breaker that drove them upon it carried them beyond, and once in the smooth lagoon, they managed to reach the shore before the boat filled. They pulled her up on the sand, and climbed to the top of the low plateau on which the palms grew; but it was now so dark that they could see nothing, and they waited for the morning to show them the familiar paths and trees of their own atoll, and their tower gleaming white through the foliage in the distance. They walked slowly towards it in silence, and when Giffen reached it, he busied himself in searching the ashes of the beacon for some spark of fire. He soon had a blaze; he brought water from the well, and boiled the eggs of the sea-birds, which he gathered from their nests in the sedge. He broke some young cocoa-nuts, and poured the milk into the shells they had made for drinking-cups, and then he approached Fenton, where he sat motionless and vacant-eyed, and begged him to eat, humbly, as if he expected some outbreak from him.

"No," said Fenton quite gently. "But you eat. I 'm not hungry."

"I reckon," said Giffen piteously, "the wind must have changed in the night without my knowing it, and brought us right back."

"Very likely," answered Fenton. "But it makes no difference. It was to be, any way."

He hardly knew how the days began to pass again; he no longer thought of escape; but a longing to leave some record of himself in this prison, since he was doomed never to quit it, grew up in his heart, and he wrote on the walls of his tower a letter to Helen, which he conjured the reader, at whatever time he came, to transcribe and send to her. He narrated the facts of his shipwreck, and the barren history of his sojourn on the island, his attempt to escape, and his return to it. He tenderly absolved her from all ties and promises, and prayed for her happiness in whatever sort she could find it. In this surrender he felt the pang which the dead may be supposed to know, when the soul passes into the exile of eternity, and sees those it leaves behind inevitably committed to other affections and other cares. Sometimes it seemed to him as if he might really be dead, and all his experience of the past year a nightmare of the everlasting sleep.

The tern that were nesting on the atoll when he first landed, and that visited it every six months to rear their young, were now a third time laying their eggs in the tufts of coarse thin grass. He thought these visits of the birds were annual, and there was nothing in the climate to correct his error, or group in fixed periods the lapse of his monotonous days. There was at times more rain, and again less rain; but the change scarcely divided the year into seasons:

flower and fruit were there at all times, and spring, summer, autumn, and winter, with their distinct variety, were ideas as alien as hills, and valleys, and streams, in this little land, raised for the most part scarcely a man's height above the sea, where there could never even be the names of these things in any native tongue. Once or twice the atoll felt the tremor of an earthquake, that perhaps shook continental shores, or perhaps only sent its vibrations along the ocean floor, and lifted, or let fall beneath the waves, some tiny point of land like their own; and once there had fallen a shower of ashes from the clear sky, which must have been carried by a wind-current from some far-off volcano. This, with the log that had drifted to their reef, was their sole message from beyond the wilderness that weltered around them from horizon to horizon, and knew no change but from calm to storm, and then to calm again. The weather was nearly always fair, with light winds or none; and often they saw an approaching cloud divide before it reached their atoll and pass on either hand, leaving it serenely safe between the two paths of the tempest. At last, how long after their return Fenton could not tell, in his indifference to the passage of the weeks and days,—a change came over the sky different from any that had portended other storms, and before night a hurricane broke from it that heaped the sea around their island, and drove it across the lagoon and high over the plateau. For two days and nights it beat against the walls of their tower; then the waters went down, and the ravaged

atoll rose from the sea again. But when Fenton clambered to the top of the tower, and looked out, he saw that it could no longer be a refuge to them. The trees of the cocoa groves were blown down and flung hither and thither; their tops were twisted off and tossed into the lagoon; their trunks lay tangled and intertwisted, as if they had been straws in the frolic of a whirlwind. The smooth beach of the lagoon was strewn with fragments of coral, torn from the reef and tossed upon it; the grassy level where the sea-birds nested was scattered with their dead bodies, caught among the coarse herbage and beaten into the white sand.

He left Giffen cowering within, and ran down from the tower to look for the boat. He found it lodged in a heap of cocoa fronds, and wedged fast among some blocks of coral; and he hurried back with his good news. He met Giffen at the door. "All right," he said to the anxious face. "The boat is safe, and we must get her afloat. You see we can't stay here."

"No," said Giffen, "we can't stay." He looked drearily out over the wreck of their fairy isle, and then with a sigh he turned into the tower again, and crouched down in the corner where Fenton had left him.

"What's the matter? Are you sick, Giffen?" demanded Fenton.

Giffen did not answer, but rose with a stupid air, and came out into the sun. He shivered, but gathered himself together, and in a dull mechanical

way set about his usual work of getting breakfast. He ate little, but when Fenton had finished, he went with him, and helped him to cut the boat free. It was hard getting it out of the mass of rocks and boughs, and it was noon before they had dragged her back from the point where the sea had carried her to a free space where they could begin to repair her.

At the end of a week they had her afloat in the lagoon once more, and provisioned from the stores accumulated in the tower.

The morning when they were to set sail, Giffen could not rise from his bed of grass. "I can't go," he said; "I 'm sick."

Fenton had seen that he was ailing with a fear from which he revolted in a frenzy of impatient exertion. If they were but once at sea again, he had crazily reasoned with himself, then they could not help themselves, and, sick or well, they must make the best of it. This illusion failed him now, and he abandoned himself to a cynical scorn of all that had hitherto supported and consoled him. Every act of self-sacrifice, every generous impulse, seemed to him the part of a fool or a madman. Till now he had thought that he had somehow endured and dared all things for Helen's sake, that anything less than he had done would have been unworthy of her; but now the devil that was uppermost in him mocked him with the suggestion that the best he could ever have done for her was to live for her, and do his utmost to return to her. As he stood looking at the face of the poor wretch who had twice betrayed him to despair, and who, at last, in this supreme moment,

had fallen helpless across the only avenue of escape that remained to him, he trembled with a strong temptation. He turned away, and went down to the lagoon-beach, where the boat swung at anchor, and the sail, on which he had worked late the night before, lay on the sand, ready to be stepped. The boat lightly pulled at its moorings on the falling tide, and he felt the strain as if it had been anchored in his heart. He drew it to the shore; he stepped the mast, and ran up the sail, which filled and tugged in the morning breeze. He dropped it again, and went back to Giffen.

As the days passed, he watched with the sick man, and brought him the water he craved, and the food he loathed; there was nothing else to be done. One night Giffen roused himself from the torpor in which he remained sunken, for the most part, and asked: "Did you ever hear that people were not afraid to die when they came to it?"

"I 've heard that—yes," said Fenton.

"I just happened to think of it; because this is the first time, since I can remember, that I wasn't afraid. I was awfully afraid to stay with you on that rock when the captain's boat went away; but I ain't sorry for it now. No, sir, you 've behaved to me like a white man from the start; and now, I 'll tell you what I want you to do. I 'm all right here,—or I *will* be, pretty soon, I reckon—and I don't want you to lose any more time. The boat 's ready, and now 's your last chance. Don't you mind me; I' d only bring you bad luck, any way. If you find land, or a ship picks you up, you can come back and see how I 'm getting along."

What had been Fenton's temptation became the burden of the sick man's delirium, and he frantically urged him to go while there was still time. He seemed to wear this notion out through mere iteration; and at last, when he awoke one day, "I dreamt," he said, "that there was a ship!" That night, sleeping or waking, he raved of a ship that had come to take them away. The third morning after, he opened his eyes, and looked into his comrade's face with ominous recovery of intelligence. "Has it come?" he asked eagerly. "The ship?"

"No, you dreamed it, Giffen," returned Fenton, with a tender compassion unalloyed by self-pity.

"My luck," said Giffen. He gasped, and made a mechanical effort to rise. He gave a sort of cry, and fixed a stare of wild demand on Fenton, who caught him in his arms.

Fenton covered up the dead face with a branch of palm, and walked giddily out into the sun. It was rising a red, rayless ball, and against this disk the figure of a ship seemed printed. He passed his hand over his eyes, but when he took it away, the spectre remained. He thought he saw a boat lying at the lagoon-beach, and her crew advancing up the sand toward him, men with friendly, home-like faces. They wavered and glided in the vision his watch-worn eyes reported to his reeling brain.

Then one of them called out to the strange figure, with matted hair, and long beard, and haggard eyes, that had stopped as if with the impulse to turn and fly,—"Hallo!'

A shudder went through Fenton as he stayed himself, and faced the men again. He could not speak, but the men waited. At last, "For God's sake," he gasped, "are you something in a dream?"

"No," replied the leader with slow gentleness, as if giving the idea consideration. "We're a boat's crew from the whale-ship Martha Brigham of New Bedford, come ashore to see what that smoke means. Who are you?"

XXI.

"I WISH to speak with you, Marian—instantly!" cried Helen, re-appearing at the Butlers'. Marian was alone in her room; Mrs. Butler was lying down, and the younger sisters were on the rocks by the sea, looking across the cove to the rocks on the Wilson place, as if they might hope to rend from them the secret of what had happened when Helen and Lord Rainford met in the Wilson cottage. With the inhumanity of their youth and inexperience they thought it very funny, and they had come away where they could enjoy this sense of it, apart from those to whom it seemed a serious affair.

It had become so serious to Marian, that she quaked in rising to meet Helen, as if she had been rising to meet Helen's ghost, and she no more thought of asking her to sit down than of offering a chair to an apparition.

"I didn't know he was to be there, Helen, indeed I didn't," she made out to say, after the moment in which she had remained fascinated by the intensity of the girl's face.

"Oh, it 's long past, that!" cried Helen. "What I wish you to tell me is simply this, Marian Ray: Is your husband part of your whole life, and was he from the very first instant?"

"From the very first instant?"

"That you were married—so that you couldn't think, couldn't consider—whether you cared for him—loved him?"

"Of course! It was all settled long before. Did—"

"I knew it! And if it isn't settled before, it's no time afterwards?"

"What an idea! What *do* you mean, Helen?"

"And it's all false about girls that marry a man because they respect and honour him, and then have a romantic time finding out that they love him?"

"What nonsense! It's the most ridiculous thing in the world! But—"

"I was sure of it! If there's anything sacred about marrying, it's the love that makes it so; and they might as well marry for money or position!" She hid her face in her hands, and then burst out again: "But I will never have such a hideous thing on *my* conscience—such a ghastly wrong to *him!* He said himself that if I wasn't sure that I cared for Robert, it would have been unjust to marry him; and now how is it better with *him?* It's worse! He said it to comfort me, and it seems monstrous to turn his words against him; but if the truth kills him he had better die! Yes, a thousand times! And don't suppose I didn't see all the advantages of accepting him that you did; and that I wasn't tempted to persuade myself that I *should* care for him. I only blush and burn to think that I saw them, and that I've come away, even now, without crushing every spark of hope out of him! I *do* respect and honour him—yes, he *is* high-minded and good every way; but

if I don't love him, his being so good is all the more reason why I shouldn't marry him. Hush! Don't say a word, Marian!" she cried, hastening to spoil her point, as women will, with hysterical insistence. "That dreadful old man who bought our house came, while you were gone, and offered himself to me one day: it makes me creep! How would it be any better to marry Lord Rainford, if I didn't love him, than to marry Mr. Everton?"

She did not wait for the indignant protest that was struggling through Marian's bewilderment at this extraordinary revelation and assumption. "I shall always say that you meant the kindest and best; but if you try to argue with me *now*, I shall never forgive you! Good-bye, dear!" She flew at her friend, and catching her round the neck, convulsively kissed her, and ran out of the house, without seeing any one else. "To the station," she gasped, climbing into the Wilson phaeton. "And, do hurry, please!"

Mrs. Butler came into Marian's room as soon as Helen had driven away. "Well?" she said.

"Oh, she's refused him,—or just the same thing! How shall we meet him? What shall we do?"

"I'm not concerned about that. What will *she* do, poor thing? That's what wrings my heart. She has thrown away the greatest chance that a girl ever did: wealth, position, devoted goodness, the truest and noblest heart!— Marian!" cried Mrs. Butler, abandoning herself for a moment to her compassionate impatience, "why did she do it?"

"She said she didn't love him," answered

Marian shortly, with a cast of contempt in the shortness.

"Well, well," said Mrs. Butler, with resignation. She had found, as every woman must, who lives to her age, that life has so many great interests besides love, that for the time she was confused as to the justice of its paramount claim in a question of marriage.

In fact, Helen found her champions in two men. When Mrs. Butler stated the case to the Captain, he promptly approved of Helen's decision.

Mrs. Butler stood surprised. "Why, do you think that people ought to marry from a *fancy?*" she asked.

"I hope my girls will never marry without it," said the Captain.

Marion reported the result to Ray, with a vexation at Helen's ridiculous behaviour, which he allowed her to vent freely before he answered her a word, chewing the end of his cigarette, as they walked to the house together from the beach, where she found him pulling his dory up on the sand. "It's not only that she's thrown away such a splendid chance, but she's thrown it away for the mere memory of a man who couldn't compare with Lord Rainford in *any* way—even if he were alive. And when Robert Fenton *was* alive, she wasn't certain, till it was too late, that she cared for him; and kept him waiting for years and years, till she could make up her mind, and had to quarrel with him *then* before she was sure of it. And now for her to pretend that she never can care for any one else, and that she can't marry Lord Rainford because she doesn't *love* him—

as if she were a girl of seventeen, instead of twenty-five! *Oh!* I've no patience with her!"

Ray said nothing for a moment. Then, "There's some difference between not being sure you do, and being sure you don't," he remarked quietly, "and the difference doesn't seem to be in Rainford's favour." After a moment, he asked, without looking at her, "What did you marry *me* for?"

"What nonsense! You know!"

"Yes, I always thought it was for love. How would you like to have me think it wasn't?"

"Don't be absurd!" cried his wife. But his words went deep, and at the bottom of her heart she felt in them a promise of the perpetual reconsecration of their marriage.

A story was at one time current (and still has its adherents among those who knew vaguely something of Helen's romance) to the effect that Fenton returned at a moment when his presence seemed a miracle opportunely wrought to save her from further struggle, and to reward her for all her suffering and self-sacrifice in the past. It fixed with much accuracy of date and circumstance the details of their dramatic meeting at the little house in the Port, where she found him waiting for her one hot, dusty afternoon in the summer, when she came back, broken in health and spirit, from a visit with some friends at the sea-side. If the story had been true, it would have brought them together the very day Helen refused Lord Rainford.

But, as a matter of fact, she went back to her work of making bonnets for cooks and second-girls in

Margaret's cottage on Limekiln Avenue, under conditions that would have caused an intelligent witness of it to wonder whether she were not expiating an error rather than enjoying the recompense of devotion to a high ideal. The rewards of principle are often scarcely distinguishable from penalties, and the spectator is confounded between question of the martyr's wisdom and a dark doubt of the value of living out any real conviction in a world so badly constituted as this. Helen, however, was harassed by neither of these misgivings. She never regretted her refusal of Lord Rainford, except for the pain it inflicted; she never blamed herself for anything but the hesitation in which she was tempted to accept him without loving him. Her sense of self-approval grew only the stronger and clearer with the trials which gathered upon her in what might have seemed to others a sort of malign derision. Her custom fell off, and the patrons who remained to her grew inevitably more and more into an odious mastery; their exactions increased as her health failed, and she could not always keep her promises to them; they complained that other people's bonnets were better made, and "more in the style."

One night she overheard through the thin partition that separated her chamber from Margaret's a tipsy threat from Margaret's husband that he was going to be master in his own house; and that he was going to turn that girl and her bonnets into the street. He went off to his work in the morning, sullen and lowering, and she and Margaret could not look at each other. She fled to Boston for the day, which she passed in incoherent terror at Clara

Kingsbury's; when she turned from this misery the next morning and ventured back to Margaret's, an explosion at the glass-works, so opportune that it seemed to her for a black instant as if she were guilty of the calamity through which she escaped, had freed her from all she had to dread from Margaret's husband.

But quite the same end of her experiment had come. Margaret could not live upon the little sum that Helen paid her for board; in spite of her impassioned devotion to her darling, and her good intention (witnessed again and again to all the saints), she was forced to break up her little establishment and find a servant's place; and Helen did not know where else to go.

In her extremity she appealed, of course, neither to the Butlers nor to Clara Kingsbury, but to Cornelia Root, and this proved to be the most fortunate as well as the most natural course. Zenas Pearson had just moved his photographic establishment up from Hanover Street to the fashionable quarter of the town, and had applied to Cornelia for some pretty-appearing, respectable girl, to stay in the front room and receive people, and show them the different styles of photographs, and help them to decide in what shape and size they would be taken. There was nothing mean about Zenas Pearson, and he was willing, he told Cornelia, to pay the right girl ten dollars a week as a start-off, and to put it up to twelve within the year if she behaved herself, and showed any sconce for the business.

Cornelia trembled with excitement and eagerness in laying the proposition before a person so perfectly

adapted to the place in every respect as Helen, and they did not lose an instant in going to Zenas and closing with him. Did she want to come right off? he asked Helen, and at a little hesitation on her part he looked more closely at her worn face and said, "Well, take a week to recuperate, and come the 20th. I don't know as I 'll be ready for you much before that time, any way."

She spent the week with the Butlers, who were now too well used to her eccentricity to attempt any protest against this new phase of it. They had all reconciled themselves to her refusal of Lord Rainford; even Marian Ray had accepted the inevitable, and she and Helen had a long quiet talk about the matter, in which they fully made up what had almost been a quarrel between them about it, and Marian told her the latest news of him, and how splendidly he had behaved about her, justifying and applauding her with a manly self-abnegation which permitted no question of her conduct throughout.

"Yes, he is very generous," said Helen, with a sigh; and something happened that day which made her feel that the word was hardly adequate. She had gone with Marian, who wished to give some instructions about a picture she was having framed, to the shop where Helen had her memorable meeting with Lord Rainford; and when the business was finished the proprietor said with a certain hesitation: "Miss Harkness, you remember being in our place about a year ago with an English gentleman who was looking at some imitation limoges in the window?"

Helen looked an amazed, and perhaps alarmed, assent.

"He came back and bought them after you went away, and said he would send his address; but we've never heard of him from that day to this, and we don't want his jars *and* his money. I thought perhaps you could tell me who he was."

"Yes," said Helen, "it was Lord Rainford. But he's in England now."

"Oh!" said the proprietor. And as she said nothing more, he presently bowed himself apologetically away.

"Why didn't you let *me* give his address?" asked Marian, who had been checked in a wish to do so by a glance from Helen.

"I don't believe he ever intended to take them away; he thought they were hideous," Helen answered. She added presently, "He must have gone back to buy them because I said that the poor wretch who painted them was to be pitied!"

Marian had now been at home more than six months, and her Anglo-mania had in some degree abated. She no longer expected to establish an hereditary aristocracy and a State Church among us, whatever she secretly wished to do. She had grown resigned to the anomalies of our civilisation in some degree. She had rediscovered certain traits of it that compared favourably even with those of England; but she cherished a conviction that an English noble was the finest gentleman in the world; that her own husband was still finer was a mystery of faith, easily tenable, though not susceptible of exegesis.

She now preserved the silence of one whose point has been sufficiently made for her, and left Helen to recognise it. Helen was not reluctant to do so. "Yes, Marian," she said fervently, "considering what had just happened, that was very magnanimous in him. It was exquisite!"

"Oh, it was merely what he owed to himself as a gentleman," said Marian, with well-concealed triumph.

It seemed to be a day of trial for Helen. A gaunt, shabby man, coming down the pavement towards them, lifted his hand half-way to his hat at sight of her, and then, as if seeing himself unrecognised, dropped it to his side again, and slunk by. Helen turned and stopped him. "Mr. Kimball! Is that you?"

"Yes, what there is left," answered Kimball, with a ghost of his old quizzical smile, and the spectre of his municipal, office-holding patronage of manner, as he took Helen's extended hand.

"Why—why—what's the matter?"

"Well, I've been sick for a spell back. Just got to knocking round again," said Kimball evasively. "You don't look over and above well yourself, Miss Harkness."

"No, no, I'm *not* well. But I'm better now. Are you—" She stopped, with her eyes upon his conspicuous shabbiness, and, through an irresistible association of ideas, she added—"Mr. Kimball, I hope you got the money that I returned to you safely?"

Kimball hung his head, and kicked the pavement with his toe. "Well, no," he answered reluctantly, "I didn't."

"You didn't *get* it?"

"It's all right. I told my wife at the time that I knew you sent it. But I guess somebody in the Post-Office got the start of me."

"Why *didn't* you tell me?" demanded Helen.

"Well, you know, I couldn't do that," said Kimball.

Helen took out her purse. There were only twelve dollars in it, and Marian had walked on, so that she could not borrow of her, and make up the whole sum at once. But she put the money in Kimball's hand, and said, "I will *bring* you the rest this very day. Shall I bring it to the Custom-House?"

"O no; there 's been a change, you know. My collector was kicked out, and all our heads went into the basket together. I ain't there any more. I guess we 'll call this square now. I don't feel just right about taking this money, Miss Harkness. But I 've been sick, and my wife ain't very well herself; and—well, I guess it 's a godsend." His lips twitched. "I feel kind of mean about it, but I 'll have to stand it. There ain't a thing in the house, or I *wouldn't* take it. My wife and me both said we *knew* you sent it."

"Who in the world is your shabby friend, Helen?" demanded Marian when Helen had overtaken her at last.

"Oh, he used to be in the Custom-House. He 's a character. He 's the one who told Lord Rainford, when he offered to deposit money for the duties on those Egyptian things he brought me from you, that it wasn't necessary between gentlemen!"

"How amusing!"

"Yes, I thought it was amusing too. But I don't think I can ever laugh at him again." She shut her lips till she could command her voice sufficiently to tell what had just passed between her and Kimball.

Marian continued to be amused by it. In the flush of her re-Anglicisation, she said it was a very American affair. But she added that something ought really to be done for the chivalric simpleton, and that she was going to tell Ray about him.

During the week that Helen spent with the Butlers, before she was to take her place in Zenas Pearson's Photographic Parlours, as he called them, the wisdom of her decision was tested by another incident or accident—one of those chances of real life which one must hesitate to record because they have so much the air of having been contrived. From her life in the Port she had contracted the suburban habit of lunching at restaurants, so alien to the Bostonian lady proper; and one day, when she was down town alone, she found herself at a table in Parker's, so near that of two other ladies that she could not help hearing what they said. They were both dressed with a certain floridity, and one was of a fearless, good-humoured beauty, who stared a great deal about the room and out of the window, and, upon the whole, seemed amused to realise herself in Boston, as if it were a place whose peculiarities she had reflected much upon, without being greatly awed or dazzled by them. "We used to see a great many Bostonians in California when the Pacific road was first opened. They came out

there in shoals, and I afterwards met them in Japan, —men, I mean, of course. I had quite a flirtation with one—the pleasantest one I ever met." The lady breathed, above the spoil of the quail-on-toast before her, a sigh to the memory of this agreeable passage of her life. "Yes, a regular flirtation. It was on the steamer coming to San Francisco; and he was on his way home to be married, poor fellow, and I suppose he thought, Now or never! The steamer broke her shaft, and had to put back to Japan, and he took passage home on a sailing vessel that we hailed, and she was lost, and the last that was known of him he was left on a reef in the Pacific with three others, while a boatful of people went off to prospect for land. When the boat came back they were gone, and nobody ever knew what became of them."

"And whatever became of the girl, Mrs. Bowers?"

"Oh, as to that this deponent saith not. Consoled herself, I suppose, in the usual way."

The two women laughed together, and began to pull up their sacks, which had dropped from their shoulders into their chairs behind them.

Helen tried to speak, but she could not. She tried to rise and seize the woman before she left the room, to make her render some account of her words. But the shame of a terrible doubt crushed her with a burden under which she could not move. When the waiter, respectfully hovering near, approached at last, and, viewing her untouched plate, suggestively asked if he could bring her anything more, she said "No," and paid her check and came out.

It was a beautiful day, but she walked spiritlessly along in the sunshine that seemed to smile life into everything but her; and she feebly sought to adjust the pang of this last blow to some misdeed of her own. But she could not. She could only think how she should once have contrasted Lord Rainford's nobleness with Robert's folly, and indignantly preferred him. But now she was aware of not having the strength to do this—of not being able to pluck her heart from the idea to which love and loss had rooted it; and she could not even wish to wish anything but to die. In another world, perhaps—if there were any other world—Robert could explain and justify the weakness for which she could not do other than pity him here.

Her brain was so dull and jaded withal, that when she dragged herself wearily up the steps at the Butlers' door, she felt no surprise that it should be the old Captain who opened it to her, or that he should seek to detain her in the drawing-room alone with him. At last she found something strange in his manner, something mysterious in the absence of all the others, and she asked, "What is it, Captain Butler?"

He seemed troubled, as though he felt himself unequal to the task before him. "Helen," he began, "do you still sometimes think that those men's story about Robert wasn't true?"

"I know it wasn't true. I always knew they killed him. Why do you ask me that?"

"I didn't mean that," returned the Captain, with increasing trouble, "but that perhaps he—"

She turned upon him in awful quiet. "Captain

Butler, don't try to soften or break any bad news to me! What is it I haven't borne that you think I must be spared now? You will make it worse, whatever you are keeping back. Did they leave him there to starve on that rock? Did—"

"No—no. It isn't that. Mrs. Butler thought that I could prepare—we've had news—"

"News?—prepare? Oh, how can you mock me so? For pity's sake, what is it?"

The Captain's poor attempt to mediate between her and whatever fact he was concealing broke down in the appeal with which he escaped from Helen through the open door, and called his wife. She came quickly, as if she had been waiting near; and as on that day when she had told the girl of her father's death, she took her fast in her arms. Perhaps the thoughts of both went back to that hour.

"Helen—Helen—Helen! It's life this time! You have borne the worst so bravely, I know you can bear the best. Robert is here!"

The papers of that time gave full particulars of Fenton's rescue from the island on which he was cast away, and the reader can hardly have forgotten them. It is unnecessary even to record the details of his transfer, after several months, from the whaler which took him off, to another vessel homeward bound, and of his final arrival in San Francisco. When the miracle of his resurrection had become familiar enough for Helen to begin to touch it at here and there a point, she asked him why he did not telegraph her from San Francisco as soon as he landed, and instantly answered herself that

it would have killed her if he had done so; and that if he had not been there at once to help her bear the fact of his being alive, she could not have borne it.

They were married, and went to live in a little house in a retired street of Old Cambridge, and Margaret came to live with them. She sacrificed to this end an ideal place in an expressman's family in East Somerville, where she had the sole charge of the housework for twelve persons; but it was something that Miss Helen kept no other girl; and it was everything that she could be with her when Lieutenant Fenton should be ordered away to sea again. He had six months' leave, and he tried to find some occupation which would justify him in quitting the navy. He found nothing, and in the leisure of this time Helen and he concerned themselves rather with their past than their future. They rehabilitated every moment of it for each other; and, as their lives came completely together again, he developed certain limitations which at first puzzled her. She did not approach that passage which related to Lord Rainford without trying to establish defences from which, if necessary, she could make reprisals; and she began by abruptly asking one day, "Robert, who is Mrs. Bowers?"

"Did *she* turn up?" he asked in reply, with a joyous guiltlessness that at once defeated and utterly consoled his wife. "That was very kind of her! But how did she find you out? I never told her your name!"

"She never turned up—directly," said Helen;

and then she told him how she happened to know of Mrs. Bowers, and of the bad half-hour that lady had given her.

"Well, she might call it a flirtation," said Fenton, "but I didn't know it was one. *I* thought it was just walking up and down the deck and talking about you."

"I'd rather you wouldn't have talked to that kind of people about me," returned Helen, with a retrospective objection which she tried in vain to make avail her.

"How should *I* know what kind of person she was? *I* never took the least notice of anything she did or said."

This was heavenly hopeless, and Helen resolved that for the present at least she would not inculpate herself. But she found herself saying, "Well, then, I'm going to tell you about something that all came from my being desperate about you, and flirting a little one day just after you sailed." She went on to make a full and free confession, to which her husband listened with surprisingly little emotion. He could not see anything romantic in it at all. He could not see anything remarkable in Lord Rainford.

"You can't," he said finally, "expect me to admire a man who came so near making an Enoch Arden of me."

"Oh, you know he never came near doing anything of the kind, Robert."

"He came as near as he could. Do you wish me to admire him because you refused him? You refused *me* three times."

"I wish you to—to—appreciate him."

Fenton laughed. "Oh, well, I do that, of course. I've no doubt he was a very good fellow; and I daresay he's behaving more sensibly than I did. From what you tell me, I think he'll get over his disappointment. Perhaps he'll end by marrying some one who will help him to complete his reaction, and cure him of *all* his illusions about us over here. But his buying that pottery was nothing. He would have been a very poor creature if he had resented your refusal; I know that from my own experience." He would not be serious about Lord Rainford; he made her share in the good-natured slight with which husband and wife always talk over the sorrows of unlucky pretendants. He professed to find something much more admirable in Kimball's quiet acceptance of the loss he had incurred through Helen: that, he said, was fine, for Kimball was supported by no sentimental considerations, and had no money to back his delicacy. He looked Kimball up, and made friends with him; and a man who could do nothing to advance his own fortunes had the cheerful audacity to suppose that he might promote another's. He wrote to Washington, and tried to get Kimball appointed assistant-keeper of one of the lighthouses on Cape Ann; but, pending the appointment of a gentleman who had "worked" for the newly-elected Congressman, Kimball found a place as night-watchman in a large clothing-house, where he distinguished himself, when off duty one day, by quelling a panic among the sewing-girls at an alarm of fire, and getting them safely out of the building. The newspaper *éclat* following this affair seemed to have silently

wrought upon the imagination of a public-spirited gentleman, who about that time was maturing his plans for the establishment of our well-known Everton Institute of Industrial Arts for Young Ladies. The Institute was opened on a small scale in the residence of Mr. Everton at Beacon Steps, which he devoted to it during his life, and at his death it was removed to the new building at West Newton; but from the first Kimball was put in charge as janitor, and still holds his place from the trustees.

He came rather apologetically to announce his appointment to the Fentons. "I don't seem to feel," he said, "as if it was quite the thing to go in there without saying 'By your leave' to *you*, Mrs. Fenton. I hain't forgot the first time I was in the house; and I don't suppose I ever passed it without lookin' up at them steps and thinkin' of you, just how you appeared that day when you came runnin' up with your bag in your hand, and I let you in."

"Yes, I remember it too, Mr. Kimball. But you mustn't think of it as my old home, and you mustn't feel as if you were intruding. If the place could be anything to me after Mr. Everton had lived there, I should be glad to think of you and Mrs. Kimball in it, looking after those poor girls, as I know you will."

"I guess we shall do the best we know how by 'em. And whatever Mr. Everton is—and I guess least said 's soonest mended, even amongst *friends*, about him in *some* respects—you can't say but what it 's a good object. If he can have girls without any dependence but themselves taught how to do something for their own livin', *I* guess it 's about equal to turnin' the house into a church. And I

guess the old gentleman 's about right in confinin' it to girls brought up as ladies. I ain't much on caste myself, as I know of, but I guess that 's the class of girls that need help the most."

"O yes, indeed!" cried Helen fervently. "Of all helpless creatures in the world, they are the most to be pitied. I know you 'll be kind to them, Mr. Kimball, and save their poor, foolish feelings as much as you can, and not mind their weak, silly little pride, if it ever shows itself."

"I guess you can depend upon me for that," said Kimball. "I understand girls pretty well—or I ought to, by this time. And once a lady, always a lady, I say."

Helen even promised to come with her husband to see the Kimballs in her old home. She courageously kept her promise, and she was rewarded by meeting Mr. Everton there. He received her very cordially, showing no sort of pique or resentment,—no more, Fenton suggested, than Lord Rainford himself,—and took her over the house, and explained all his plans to her with a flattering confidence in her interest. There were already some young ladies there, and he introduced Helen to them, and, in the excess of his good feeling, hinted at the desirability of her formally addressing them as visitors to schools are expected to do. She refused imperatively; but to one of the girls with whom she found herself in sympathy she opened her heart and told her own story. "And oh!" she said at the end, "do learn to do something that people have *need* of, and learn to do it well and humbly, and just as if you had been working for your living all your life. Try to notice how men do

things, and when you're at work, forget that you're a woman, and, above all, a young lady."

After she came away, she said there was one more thing she wished to say to that girl.

"What was that?" asked Fenton.

"Not to omit the first decent opportunity of marrying any one she happened to be in love with."

"Perhaps it wasn't necessary to say that," suggested her husband.

"No," sighed Helen; "and that's what undoes all the rest."

When the Butlers heard of this visit of hers to her old home, it seemed to them but another instance of that extraordinary fortitude of spirit which they had often reason to admire in her. Marian Ray could not suffer it to pass, however, without some expression of surprise that Fenton should have allowed her to go: she was a little his rival on behalf of Lord Rainford still, and she seized what occasions she could for an unfavourable comparison of their characters. In fact, now that he had really come back, she had not wholly forgiven him for doing so; but the younger sisters rejoiced in him as a thoroughly satisfactory equivalent for the romance they had lost in the nobleman. If Helen was not to be Lady Rainford, it was consoling to have her the wife of a man who had been cast away on a desert island, and had been mourned for dead a whole year and more. They were disappointed, however, that he should not be always telling the story of his adventures, but should only now and then drop bits of it in a scrappy way, and once —but once only—when he and Helen were at

Beverley, they pinned him down to a full and minute narration.

"Ah, but," said Jessie Butler, when all was told, to the very last moment of his meeting Helen after his return, "you haven't said how you *felt*, any of the time."

"Well, you know," answered Fenton, rising, and going over to where Helen sat dwelling on him with shining eyes, "I can look back and see how I *ought* to have felt at given points."

"But—but how *did* you feel," pursued one of his rapt auditors, "when—"

"No, no," said Fenton, "that will do! I've given you the facts; you must make your own fiction out of them. And I think, while you're at it, you'd better get another hero."

"Never!" exclaimed Jessie Butler. "We want *you*. And we want you to behave something *like* a hero, *now*. You can, if you will. Can't he, Helen?"

"I never can make him," said his wife fondly.

"Then that's because he doesn't appreciate his own adventures properly. Now—"

"Why," explained Fenton, "the adventures were merely a lot of things that happened to me."

"Happened to you!" cried his champion against himself in generous indignation. "Did it merely *happen to you* to put that rope round you and swim ashore with it when the ship struck? Did it merely *happen to you* to stay there, and let the others go off in the boat?"

Fenton affected to give the arguments serious thought. "Well, you know, I couldn't very well have done otherwise under the circumstances."

"You needn't try to get out of it in that way!

You have every attribute of a real hero," persisted his worshipper.

The hero laughed, and did his best to bear the part like a man. Another of the young girls took up the strain.

"Yes, you would be entirely satisfactory if you had only had some better companion in misfortune."

"Who,—Giffen?"

"Yes. He seems so hopelessly commonplace," sighed the gentle connoisseur of castaways.

"He was certainly not more than an average fellow-being," said Fenton, preparing to escape. "But he was equal to his bad luck."

When he and Helen were alone, he was a long time silent.

"What is the matter, Robert?" she asked tenderly at last.

"Oh, nothing," he said. "But whenever it comes to that point, I'm afraid that Giffen *knew* I wanted to leave him to die alone there!"

"You *didn't* want to!" she protested for him.

"Ah, don't put it that way!" he cried. "The best you can say for me is that I didn't do it."

She could only tell him that she loved him more dearly for the temptation he confessed, than if there had been no breach in his armour. He had a simplicity in dealing with all the incidents of his experience which seemed to her half divine. When she hotly invoked justice upon the wretches who had stolen the boat and abandoned him and Giffen on the island, he said, "Oh, what could atone for a thing like that? The only way was for them to escape altogether." He would not even let her denounce

them as cowards ; he contended that they had shown as much mere courage in remaining to rifle the ship as he had in anything. Giffen, he said, was the only one to be admired, for Giffen was afraid all the time, and yet remained to share his fate. But Helen contended that this was nothing wonderful ; and again she wished to praise him for what he had suffered.

"Ah, don't!" he said, with tragic seriousness. "There's nothing in all that. It might all have happened to a worse man, and it has happened to many a better one. It hurts me to have you value me for it. Let it go, and give me a little chance for the future." He was indeed eager to escape from all that related to that passage of his life, and Helen learned to believe this. At certain moments he seemed to be suffering from some strange sort of mental stress, which he could not explain, but which they both thought must be the habit of anguish formed in his imprisonment on the atoll. It sometimes woke him from his sleep—the burden, but not the drama, of nightmare—a mere formless horror, which they had to shape and recognise for themselves.

It grew less and less as the time passed, and when his orders came to report for duty at Washington, they had strength for the parting. He supposed that he was to be sent to sea again, but he found that he was to be put in charge for the present of the revenue cutter for provisioning the lighthouses on the Rhode Island coast; and when removed from this service, he was appointed commandant at the Narragansett Navy Yard. It is there that Helen still finds her home in a little house overlooking the Bay, on the

height behind the vast sheds in which two frigates of obsolete model, began in Polk's time, are slowly rotting on the stocks, in a sort of emblematic expression of the present formidable character of the American navy.

Fenton is subject to be ordered away at any moment upon other duty; but till his orders come he rests with Helen in as much happiness as can fall to the share of people in a world of chance and change. The days of their separation have already faded into the incredible past: and if her experience ever had any peculiar significance to her, it is rapidly losing that meaning.

She remains limited in her opinions and motives by the accidents of tradition and circumstance that shape us all; at the end she is neither more nor less than a lady, as she was at the beginning. She has acquired no ideals of woman's work or woman's destiny; she is glad to have solved in the old way the problems that once beset her; and in all that has happened she feels as if she had escaped, rather than achieved. She is the same, and yet not quite the same; for one never endures or endeavours to one's-self alone; she keeps her little prejudices, but she has accumulated a stock of exceptions to their application; her sympathies, if not her opinions, have been enlarged; and, above all, her unconsciousness has been trained to meet bravely and sweetly the duties of a life which she is content should never be splendid or ambitious.

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